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## THE SORREL STALLION

THIS splendid tale of a Western Stallion is a welcome relief from that peculiar sentimentality which seems to cling with such tenacity to the usual stories of this kind.

It is more than a really good story of a horse, for the book has splendid characteristics as a tale, and its appeal is to young and old alike. As a history it should rival *Black Beauty* in popularity. The colt who grew into a wild-spirited stallion, returning at last, an old wanderer, to the home range, will become very dear to the reader.

Mr. Grew has made a very successful attempt to understand the emotional behaviour of his subject and the reactions to the environment in which Sorrel finds himself. Paul Brown's many charming drawings collaborate in the making of one of the most delightful animal books of recent years.





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THE UNTAMED

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THE MARE OF PANDORA

MIGRATION

OUT OF THE ASHES

# THE SORREL STALLION

by  
DAVID GREW



ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL BROWN

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1933

**TO**  
**MY LITTLE SON**  
**RAYMOND**

**WHOSE FIRST YEAR OF LIFE WAS AS HELPFUL IN  
THIS WRITING, AS AN INCENTIVE, AS WAS THE  
UNDERSTANDING SYMPATHY OF HIS DEVOTED MOTHER.**



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# THE SORREL STALLION

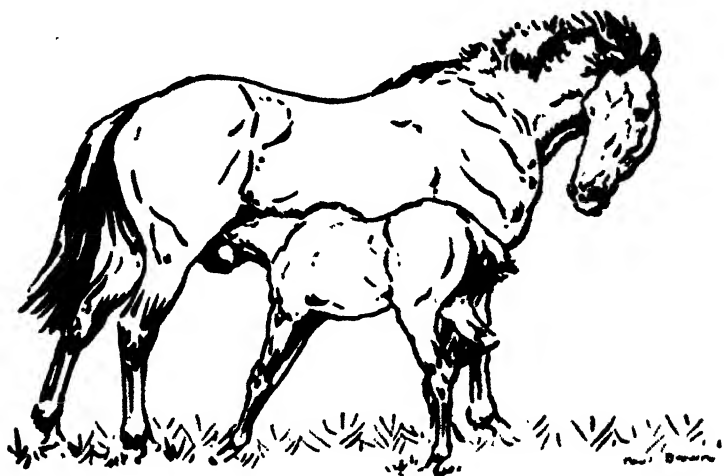
## CHAPTER I

### WHEN THE FIRST PROP FALLS

**H**ORSE or man, colt or child, every living thing comes puzzled to the conclusion that life is a succession of changes, moving along like a river to the sea. Things never stand still. No one really wants them to stand still. Life would be intolerable if they did. And yet, every throbbing heart cries out against the incidents, the abrupt events that come with cataclysmic force and turn its world upside down. In the life of every individual something is continually happening that seems to change the very atmosphere he breathes, after which things never seem the same again.

The little fuzzy sorrel colt's early days of perfect satisfaction with his environment came to a decisive jolt. His happy infancy had been blessed by what had appeared to be an inexhaustible supply of delicious milk. He had found wherever he moved all the soft green grass he cared to nibble at. His large, affectionate mother had constantly watched over him and protected him. She had stood by his side like a soft, red impenetrable wall against all harm. She had been the very prop of his existence ;

and suddenly she walked away from him, as it were—the prop he had leaned upon fell with disturbing abruptness. He had, to be sure, been dimly aware of a change in his mother's attitude toward him



His happy infancy had been blessed by what had appeared to be an inexhaustible supply of delicious milk.

for some days ; but he had been too certain in his faith in the endurance of his happy state to believe this change when it had first appeared.

It was spring on the rangeland along the Clear-water River in western Idaho. The cold days of winter had kept the sorrel colt dozing, close to his mother's warm sides, but with the coming of the sunny days of spring, his large round eyes acquired an intense interest in things around him. Out of the shadows of inexperience came the forms, the colours, and the personalities of the horses and colts who lived on the rangeland with his mother and himself. Space divided itself into hills and hollows, stones and bushes and trees, the sunny

rangeland and the abysmal canyon depths, through the centre of whose awe-inspiring shadows ran the Clearwater River with a splash and a roar, and foam about the cluttered rocks.

A cool south wind had hummed over the hill-tops of the range all night long. Dozing, and waking into darkness, with a start, the sorrel colt struggled as in a dream with the unmistakable decisiveness of the thing that was happening to him ; and yet, as the greyness of a new day wiped the night away from the whole of the eastern horizon, he allowed himself to believe that when his mother got to her feet, she would let him drink again of her delicious milk which he had come to feel was his, forever, merely for the effort of taking.

He pictured her standing up ; saw himself carefully approaching her, reaching out for the soft warm source of supply, and drinking to his heart's content. Off in space, about the knob on which he lay by his mother's side, various of the mares and their colts lay dozing ; and scattered between them, some of the more restless work-horses were grazing slowly and rhythmically. Too much preoccupied with the change that was so hard to accept, Sorrel was not dozing. He was watching the mouse-coloured colt who was stirring some ten feet away, beside the white mare, his mother.

Suddenly the white mare rose laboriously to her feet. At once the black colt got up on his shaky, springy legs, and switching his stubby, faded black tail for excitement, he immediately helped himself to milk.

Sorrel could hardly endure the sight. He jumped up with alacrity ; and in doing so, managed to

brush against his mother's big, drowsy head. His mother, as she had done a thousand times, murmured affectionately to him; and to his satisfaction began rising, groaning a bit as she was in the habit of doing, every time she either got to her feet or lowered herself to the ground. Sorrel watched her with nervous expectation. She was apparently still the good kind mother she had always been; and yet he remembered clearly enough that she had hurt him, the day before, when he had tried to help himself to her milk.

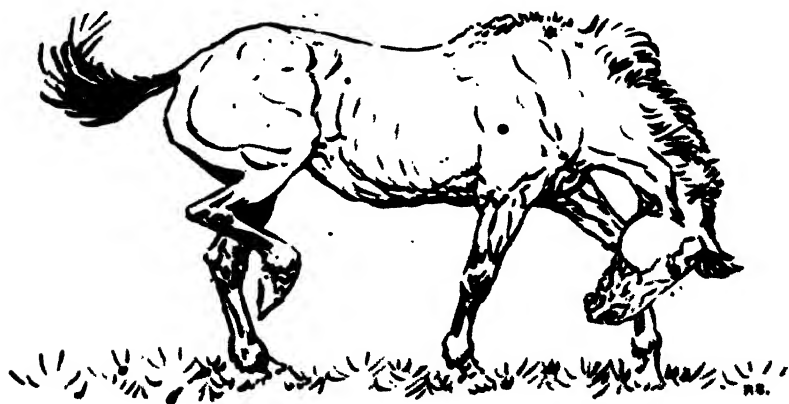
The big mare began to graze. Sorrel lowered his head close to hers, and with his lips reluctantly took in a tiny bunch of grass blades. He tore them off quite expertly, and shook his head as the cold dew in them touched his warm teeth. His mother took a step forward and to the side, and the manner with which she set her foot down carefully, so as not to step on him, convinced him that he had a right to be hopeful.

As inconspicuously as he knew how, he turned around into position. First he grazed a bit, as he faced the opposite direction to that of his mother; then he slowly and cautiously raised his head. He had barely fouched her red flank, however, when there came a threatening neigh, and her hind foot kicked out, almost hitting him. At the same time she swished her long black tail angrily, striking him in the face, hairs of it going right into his eyes, making them smart and water, so that he could hardly see. Then she walked off in disgust, leaving him there, the very breath taken out of him.

Of course, he deserved it. She had tried to show him that he was no longer a baby, that it was time

for him to support himself, on the grass he could crop; and yet it was hardly possible for him to understand all that, without being hurt. All that he could perceive, was the fact that she had been kind and generous and affectionate up to a certain vague moment, and that thereafter an unreasonable change had come about in her. The milk that he could no longer have, as he had had so freely, became doubly desirable; and the final conviction that his mother was not to supply him with all that he wanted, any more, brought with it a feeling of loneliness and fear.

Around about him, the horses, the mares and their colts were scattered over the knobby hill-top, fast emerging from the dusk, into the broader daylight which was now quite intense above the rolling



Buckskin and the flies.

horizon. They took to their grazing, seriously now, moving slowly northward, in the direction of the canyon and the river. Sorrel looked from one of these horses to the other. There was a carelessness,

a care-free indifference in the slow leisurely way in which they moved and ripped the grass blades from the lavish earth, which mitigated, somewhat, his fear and disappointment. They seemed so contented and unafraid.

His mother had moved along faster than he had thought, and when he discovered the fact that she was some fifty feet away from him, he aroused himself from his preoccupation and trotted concernedly toward her. Near her, he found some grass to his liking, and being very hungry, he cropped for some minutes with a will, until suddenly looking back, he saw the white mare with her mouse-coloured, black colt, just a few feet behind him. He saw the white mare only, merely making out the small curve of a faded, black little muzzle below her flanks. That the black colt was soon to arrive at the same ruthless change did not, of course, occur to him. He gazed with envy, fascinated by the sight.

Sorrel looked about nervously. Every horse but the big buckskin plug was busy grazing. He was holding his swollen foot off from the ground for a rest, and his big old busybody head high, he was looking right at Sorrel. It seemed to Sorrel that the old fellow was suspicious of what he was about to do, and so he lowered his head a moment and pretended to be grazing, watching the buckskin plug through the corner of an eye. The old plug was apparently deeply interested. He curled his loose, ugly lip, and bared his enormous yellow teeth.

Sorrel waited patiently. When the old buckskin finally lowered his head to the ground, he seized his opportunity. He moved swiftly toward the white

mare and took hold of the dug on his side, drawing so eager a draught, that the white mare surmised immediately what was happening.

But the old white mare was too old and too good-natured to concern herself with such punishment as Sorrel may have deserved. She merely swished her tail with impatience and walked off, leaving the two colts, their muzzles wet with milk, to look into each other's faces. Black was as good-natured as his mother. That the sorrel colt had made an attempt to steal his milk did not bother him at all. His wet muzzle bobbing up and down a few times, he reached out timidly to sniff at the sorrel colt's muzzle. Sorrel responded with equal care and interest. Black's muzzle, smelling of milk, was soft and warm. Sorrel experienced a strong attraction for the black colt. He found himself wanting to touch him, to run with him. Vibrating with affection, he rubbed his muzzle all the way down the black colt's side, swerving around his fat little rump to the other side of him, pressing his body emotionally against him; and then, in the exuberance of their feelings, both, by a single impulse, leaped forward and raced down the incline.

The little pinto filly, lying near her bay mother, raised her head and looked at them with fear. The frisky colts ran around the entire hill-top and came tearing back again past the filly. This time, she quickly sprang to her feet and ran whimpering to her mother's side. The bay mare laid back her ears and warned the boisterous colts to keep away from her daughter.

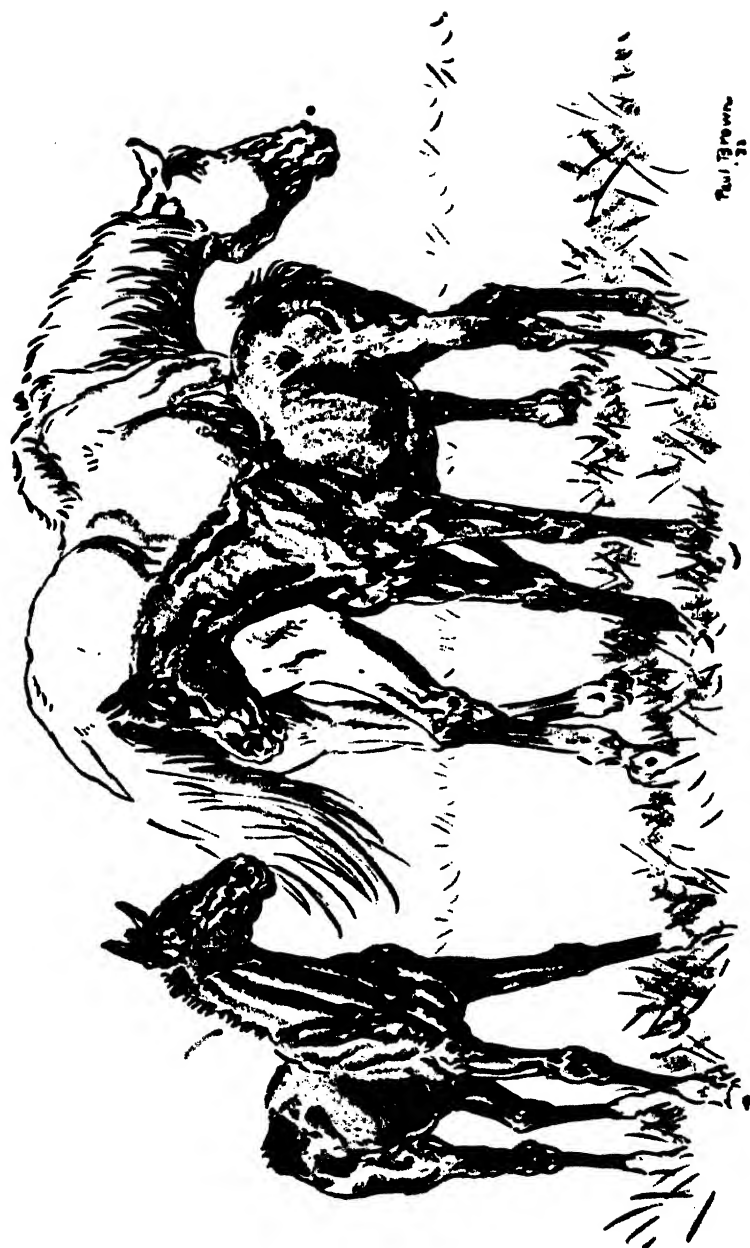
But their noisy galloping annoyed the bigger horses, too. The old buckskin plug, when they



came too near him, lumbered off haltingly, grumbling with displeasure as he went. One of the three big work horses even went so far as to lay back his ears and kick high into the air with his hind legs, but fleeing in fear from his hoofs, they came near a white young horse. The beautiful young horse entered into the spirit of their play, by running with them and calling to them genially. He ran right in, between them, and pulling easily ahead, led them away from the rest of the herd.

He was a most attractively clean white fellow, with good nature evident in every curve of his sleek and graceful body. Sorrel almost strained himself in his desire to keep up with him. Several times before this, the white young horse had shown a cordiality that had delighted Sorrel, but never had he felt so great a need for his fellowship as he felt it this cool spring morning. This friendship had appeared suddenly out of the darkness of the change that had come into his life, and it gave Sorrel something new to hang his faith and trust upon.

The sun reached up over the sombre strip of woodland beyond the range fence in the east, and the heavy frost on the ground began to lose its strong sparkle. But there was enough coldness left in the air to make running most satisfying. The young white horse could run very much faster than either Sorrel or Black. He stopped, however, as soon as he was a hundred feet or so ahead of them, to give the youngsters a chance to catch up with him, grazing lustily for the moment. But as soon as the two colts reached him, White would start off again. Sometimes he would deliberately slacken



Paul Brown  
1933

She merely swished her tail with impatience and walked off.



his pace and let them get a bit ahead of him, then he would shoot forward with the easy swing of a coyote, and overtaking them, leave them far behind. • When White got hungry enough to turn to his grazing without any inclination to interrupt it, Sorrel on one side, and Black on the other, they moved toward the canyon lip, grazing like grown-up horses.

The rest of the herd soon came along the same way, and when the old white mare got within a few feet of them, Black, who was still more of a baby than Sorrel, ran anxiously to her. Sorrel, on the other hand, clung more tenaciously to his new-found friend, with all the adoration of youth, unconsciously emulating his manner and his bearing, imitating his way of arching his beautiful white neck, his studied look across the range, his powerful snort, or his magnificent way of prancing and tossing his head and mane. A dozen times they would stop and sniff noses; and with every touch, Sorrel gained strength and joy. •

The herd stopped grazing abruptly and moved down the steep canyon slope, as if an order to do so had been given them. White leaped forward with the daredevil recklessness of youth. Down the steep path he went, slipping, sliding, leaping over stones and bushes in the way. At first Sorrel tried to keep up with White, but soon he changed his mind, picking his way more carefully. When he finally got down to the pebbled bottom of the canyon, White was already at the water's edge, drinking, the breeze blowing his magnificent white mane, unfurling it like a flag.

Fifty feet from the shore toward the centre of the

river, there was a long sand-bar which stretched completely across the entire width of the range, giving it a narrow but deep little river all its own, and giving the rancher a chance to extend both the east and the west fences to the very deepest of the river current. Many a time, earlier that spring, Sorrel had stood beside his mother on the shore of the narrow little stream, watching the white young horse as he would go splashing into the water and clambering up the sand-bar, the water dripping from his body.

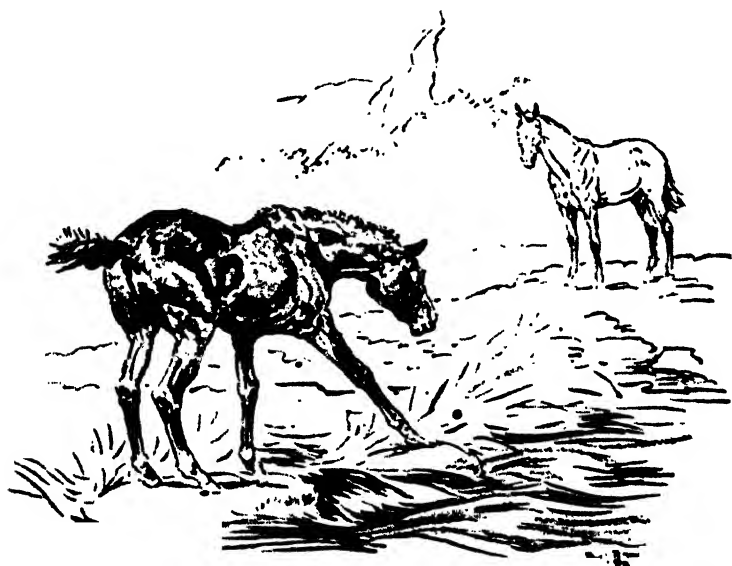
When White plunged into the stream and began beating his way to the sand-bar, Sorrel took his precious young life into his own courageous hoofs, and went in bravely, after him. In the deepest part of the little stream, as he felt the ground slipping away from him and the water swell up to his distended nostrils, he cried out in terror. But before he was able to turn back, he felt the ground under his feet again, and regaining his courage, he beat away frantically till he made the sand-bar, his satisfaction with himself splashing as high as the water that he beat with his frenzied hoofs. On the sand-bar he stopped to shake the water from his body, exactly as White had done.

By that time, the rest of the little herd had come down to the water's edge. White loped away on the sand-bar, and Sorrel loped after him, his swollen pride manifest in the crane of his neck, the erectness of his fuzzy ears, the haughty tilt of his stubby tail, the fire in his large round eyes, as he looked sideways to ascertain whether Black and all the rest were seeing him.

Occasionally the sand-bar dropped below the

surface of the water, and one time, the hole they had to wade across was so deep, Sorrel lost his breath in fear, as the water reached up to his muzzle, but his first experience helped him, and he did want to keep up with White.

They came to the west fence, where the hanging strands of barbed wire were held taut by the stones



At once he turned and bravely started across the foam-spattered rocks.

to which they had been tied, which had been thrown into the main current of the river, beyond the sand-bar. Here they were obliged to turn back, or go picking their way across the clutter of rocks between them and the shore, over which the stream leaped and splashed noisily.

When White calmly started across these rocks, the water splashing all over him, as he stepped

cautiously from stone to stone, Sorrel hesitated. He watched him a moment, nervously, then calling to him, he ran eastward on the sand-bar a few rods, in the hope that he would find a place to cross, where there were no rocks. But there didn't appear to be such a spot there. Sorrel became frantic. He rent the air with his fearful whinnies. White got to the shore, and seeing Sorrel still on the sand-bar, he trotted eastward to a point opposite him, and there he stopped and called to him.

There was a sustaining force in his genial call to Sorrel, and at once he turned and bravely started across the foam-spattered rocks, murmuring timidly, as he picked his way, White standing on the shore and watching him. When at last Sorrel reached the shore he could hardly contain himself for joy. He jumped and kicked; and White, just as buoyant, went loping away to the west fence of the range. At the barbed-wire fence, he turned into the shadows between the bushes and trees growing on the steep slope, and took the winding path up to the range above.

White groaned as he hastened up the very steep path, and Sorrel imitated his grunt, struggling several yards behind and below him. On a little ledge just above the tops of some stunted trees, Sorrel stopped for a rest, calling to White. White stopped where he was and called back. Just then, the rest of the herd, who had reached the path at the base of the canyon wall, took up these calls and answered them; and the canyon spaces reverberated with their gladsome whinnying. But the moment that Sorrel espied the mouse-coloured head of Black, pushing his head laboriously past the first

clump of bushes on the path below him, he turned and hurried frenziedly on up to White.

White had gone on ahead, but at the lip of the canyon he waited for Sorrel, and Sorrel was glad when he reached him, that he was willing to wait for Black. It gave him a chance to regain his breath. As soon as Black was able to follow, White assumed leadership and led them across the peculiar



Suddenly, White, just a few inches ahead of him, reared on his hind legs with a snort.

stony area which fringed the lip of the canyon for nearly a quarter of a mile from the west fence. Instead of taking the path which wound along the barbed-wire fence, he led them diagonally across towards the heart of the range.

As the herd almost always clung tenaciously to the path, avoiding this desert-like ridge, Sorrel had always had an intense curiosity to explore it. He followed White, fairly glowing with interest and excitement. White led the way, sniffing at every



rock, every hole, and every bush ; and both Sorrel and Black imitated his every move.

There was something uncanny about this stony area to Sorrel, however, and as they moved over the dried grass between the endless spatter of rocks, it seemed to him that there was a strange faint odour issuing from the ground, which made the skin quiver all over his body. Suddenly, White, just a few inches ahead of him, reared on his hind legs with a snort. At the same instant, Sorrel became aware of a terrifying rattle which came from a stone a few feet ahead. As he followed White, who had dashed to the side and had leaped forward, southward, he caught a glimpse of a long, wriggling rattlesnake, moving off from the rock.

From the south edge of the stony area, the ground fell away into a hollow. The very air seemed to change down there ; and Sorrel felt with greatest relief that they were clear of the dangers of the rattlesnake ridge. In front of them was a pointed hill, the highest hill on the range. Here was another landmark that Sorrel had long entertained a desire to explore ; and he was glad to see White leisurely trotting up the incline.

On the very peak of the pointed hill, they stood for some time, fascinated by the panorama of rolling hills, all around them. The other hills of the range shrank from its vantage point, and undulated southward and eastward in mystery-shrouded folds ; and Sorrel could hardly control the overpowering desire to lope away over all that fascinating world and see everything that there was to see.

Off on one of the hill-tops south of them, they espied the herd, moving and grazing slowly, and as

soon as he saw them, White swooped down the south<sup>e</sup> incline of the pointed hill, on a mad race toward them, the two colts friskily pursuing him, legs and heads and tails expressing the almost silly exuberance of their delight in the lovely world of the rangeland, in themselves and their healthy bodies.

But when they came to the herd, they were not content with merely grazing about with them. They were too energetic, too hilarious to confine themselves to the small space of a hill-top. Away they went southward, White leading and the two younger colts behind him, the herd looking on at them as if they considered them crazy.

They came to the barbed-wire gateway which opened into an avenue between two barbed-wire fences, extending from the south-west corner of the range fence to the group of strange protuberances which jutted up from behind the curve of a knob, several hundred yards south of the range fence. White walked up to the barbed-wire fence and sniffed at it, but Sorrel remained some distance behind. He was very uncomfortable there. He had had very little experience with mankind. He did remember seeing men come into the range on the backs of other horses, and he remembered also that every time man appeared in that way, the herd would go loping in terror from his approach. That those protuberances, beyond the curve of the knob, belonged to man was a fact he had acquired without knowing why.

With the air of one who tries to display his courage before inferiors, White stuck his head through, between two of the barbed wires, and

pulled at a few unimportant blades of grass in the avenue between the two wire fences.

Suddenly the easy, rhythmic patter of a trotting horse came into the wind-humming stillness. Sorrel looked tremblingly at White, who pulled his head back out from between the wires so fast, that he made one of the wires hum and vibrate. Down the avenue between the two wire fences, coming from the ranch yard, rode a man on horseback, very obviously coming into the range.

The three frightened colts turned and loped madly towards the centre of the range, now eager to get back to the herd. Up and down hill went White, relentlessly refraining from stopping for rest, till Sorrel, desperately struggling to keep up with him, felt a pain in his side. But the persistence with which White kept up his loping pace apprised Sorrel of his fear of the man, and kept him going till his pain left him and he got his second wind.

They found the herd grazing, down in a hollow. As they turned down hill, Sorrel saw all the horses raise their heads and look on at them with obvious alarm. By the time they reached them, the little band had bunched together, and were straining up the next hill on their way to the canyon.

Steadily they loped along till they hit the main trail, at the east fence of the range. At the canyon lip, they stopped to look back. Sorrel could see nothing, but the band went pouring hastily down the canyon slope.

Running had made them thirsty, and so every horse struck for the little stream, some of them going right into it up to their bellies. On the sandy

spots near the shore some of the horses sniffed around for a place to roll, others went off leisurely to sniff at some of the bushes, the colour of whose leaves attracted them. The tense excitement they had manifested up there on the range had apparently left them; and yet their listless movements were belied by a successive raising of heads, and an intermittent watching of the canyon lip.

Sorrel was standing on the shore of the little stream, close to White. His big, red mother, not far off, came up to him and caressed his neck and back with a tremulous muzzle. She hadn't seen much of him that day, and she whinnied affectionately and concernedly. Sorrel was so moved by the emotion in her manner, that he was sure she would let him have her milk again. He was about to make the attempt, when he became aware of a tenseness that seemed to move in waves from one horse to another. He saw White's neck arched high, his ears pricked like those of the older horses, and looking as he was looking, back to the canyon lip, Sorrel saw the man on horseback break into view and start slowly down the incline.

The herd went racing westward along the shore, but White splashed into the stream, making for the sand-bar, calling to Sorrel as he went. Sorrel's big red mother, now a few feet away, stopped and called to him. Sorrel hesitated just a moment, then he plunged into the stream after White. As soon as he reached the sand-bar, White, who had been waiting for him, leaped nervously away, westward. Sorrel loped after him, but as he went he turned sideways to see whether Black was following him. He saw Black on the shore, running along as he was

running, calling to him, but apparently afraid to venture across the stream. Sorrel stopped to call to him, but Black's mother came trotting back to him to urge him on with her; and for fear of losing White, Sorrel trotted on, calling as he went.

When Sorrel saw that White was nearly a quarter of a mile ahead of him on the sand-bar, he abandoned calling, and with dilated eyes raced after him. By the time he had got to the west fence, White was half-way across the jagged rocks of the stream, and the herd was half-way up the canyon wall. In spite of the terror that seized him with the feeling that he was being left alone, Sorrel did not dare attempt those jagged rocks. In his bewilderment he forgot that he had crossed those rocks earlier in the day. The angry splashing of water, the seething foam about the rocks appeared most hostile and forbidding. Sorrel stopped. Trembling from head to foot, he rent the air with his cries for help. White was still carefully picking his way over the stones. Leaping to the shore, he turned to call to Sorrel, but discovering the man on horseback, but fifty feet from him on the shore, he turned and raced in terror for the path up the incline.

Sorrel's heart nearly stopped with fright. He looked at the horse and the man, with eyes that popped out of his fuzzy head. As he dashed around the sand-bar, frantic with the uncertainty of what he ought to do, he saw the man's horse turn to the stream to drink. In his frenzied condition, he was sure that the man was coming across the stream to get him. If it weren't for the fence, he could run on west on the sand-bar and escape. Had he had enough experience with water to know what the big

river current was like, he would perhaps have taken his chances with the man. He thought the big river was like the little stream, even though the sight of so much moving water surface frightened him.

To the man's amazement, Sorrel sprang bravely into the main current of the river. As soon as he left the gentle slope of the sand-bar, the water lifted him completely off his feet. He was terrified, so terrified that he couldn't even cry out. But he



Sorrel sprang bravely into the main current of the river.

had enough of his senses left to know that his condition was precarious. Beating desperately with his slender legs, in an attempt to turn himself about, he got far enough out into the current to be carried westward with the flow of the river. He turned, but he didn't know where he was turning. The water roared in his ears and splashed over his head, and as he struggled for his breath, he took in great gulps of water through mouth and nostrils.

All Sorrel could think of doing, in his desperation,

was to beat with his legs in a mad effort to reach ground with them; and when he had almost despaired of ever getting out of the stream, he was brought with great force against a turn in the sand-bar. Spluttering, snorting, wheezing, struggling for breath, he scrambled to the sand-bar, blinded by the water in his eyes. Still trembling with fright, he shook the water from his body, then with glaring eyes began searching for the man. He discovered him on his own side of the range fence, and a short distance east of the fence, he saw the saddle-pony.

With a frantic leap, he ran off westward on the sand-bar, till he came to its end, then wisely struck out for the main shore. He knew even before he reached the shore that the man was coming his way, and he thought he heard him making a noise, as if calling to him. He realized, however, that there was no use trying to get away by turning back to the sand-bar, that his only hope of escape lay in making the shore and running west, away from the man. Accordingly, he splashed through the water as fast as he could go; but just as he placed his first foot on dry land, he discovered the man hardly a dozen feet away from him, his arms reaching out peculiarly towards him, his voice coming softly and pleadingly.

Sorrel stopped dead still where he was, too overcome with fright to move. The skin quivering along his sides, his dilated eyes peered in amazement at the tall, thin creature, who was obviously afraid to come with too great a rush. The man stopped still. Sorrel was awed by the flame-like brightness of the man's face, the reaching thinness of his extended arms. He had the feeling that if

he made a move, these thin, long arms would run out and get hold of him. At the same time he stole a glance westward, estimating just where and how he might run as soon as he dared attempt it.

Suddenly the man dropped his hands. Sorrel did not wait to see what that might mean. Leaping forward, he ran swiftly along the shore, into the great unknown world west of the range fence, calling futilely to his mother and to White, neither of whom was even in sight. As he ran, he could hear the man run behind him, calling to him. He was most wretchedly unhappy and afraid. He did not have much faith in his ability to escape this man. He ran because he didn't dare to stop; but where was he running to? What was going to happen to him? He cried out frenziedly in his anguish, looking helplessly to the river at the right, and the forbidding canyon wall at his left, and into the unknown shadows of the canyon before him.

He ran and cried, and the man ran behind him and called, for an eternity, it seemed to him; then suddenly, as he rounded a bend in the river, he saw a girl on horseback coming towards him, no more than fifty feet away. As he stopped, terrified, the horse stopped and the girl quickly dismounted.

Sorrel had seen little enough of man, but he had never seen a woman. Sensing the fact that she was but another form of man, he was transfixed by the light that seemed to come from the colour of her clothes. First thinking that she was standing still, he discovered that she was moving towards him. He did not dare try the river again. In his frenzy, he did the worst thing he could have done. He turned to his left and started up the steep wall of



the canyon. He made an attempt to push through a clump of bushes, feeling instinctively that the bushes would hide him from view ; but the bushes seemed to catch him around the neck and by the legs, and to hold him there. Before he could pull himself free, the man was upon him, his long, thin arms around his neck, the odour of him almost smothering Sorrel, his strange voice with its subtle persuasiveness right at his ears.

"Oh, don't hurt him," begged the girl, reaching up towards them, pulling her saddle-pony behind her.

"I wouldn't hurt 'im, Miss," replied the tall young rancher, smiling but embarrassed. "I was just fool enough to go off after 'im without thinkin' to take a rope, or somethin'. The little devil went right out into the river an' swam around the barbed wire. I never seen a colt try such a trick."

The young woman quickly untied a rope from her saddle, and dropping the reins she was holding, she clambered up with it. The young rancher gave her a swift, embarrassed look, thanked her profusely, and taking the rope from her, fastened it to Sorrel's neck, while Sorrel struggled and whinnied, in terror, and the young woman repeated her pleas on his behalf.

Sorrel was frantic when the young rancher started him down again to the flatter ground of the canyon bottom, as he felt the rope around his neck, but he soon realized that his frenzy only hurt him. He pulled away as hard as he could, and stood, staring wildly and helplessly at the girl, who was carefully reaching out a fragrant hand toward his muzzle.

"Isn't he the darlinest thing y'u ever saw ?"



He turned to his left and started up the steep wall of the canyon.



she crowed. "He's so afraid, poor little fellow. Look at 'ose beautiful big eyes. Oh, won't he make a beautiful saddle-pony!"

"You bet he 'will," said the young rancher, boldly. "An' here's a promise for the first ride—after he's broke, an' safe for you."

"Thank you," she said saucily, "an' you won't let me ride 'im till he's safe for *me*?"

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way," he stuttered. "I know you're a fine rider; I saw that when I first spied y'u comin'. Y'u come a long way too, didn't y'u?"

"Yes, I live in East Washington, but I'm visiting a friend of my mother's down here. You know Mrs. Downer?"

"Oh, yes. Fine people the Downers. I thought I never did see y'u 'round here."

As he pulled desperately to free himself, the rope tightened on Sorrel's neck and choked him. While he was struggling to get away, he saw the girl turn to her saddle-pony.

"I got something'll make 'im feel good," she said as she began pulling at the straps of her saddle-bag.

Sorrel saw her come back with a bright red apple in her hand. She talked to him in a very persuasive voice and she touched his nose with the apple, the fragrance of which aroused his desire to eat it, but he was afraid of her. He wanted to get away back to his own kind, and he pulled and cried out pathetically.

The young woman felt sorry for him. She stroked his neck gently, and pressed her soft, warm, fragrant cheek against his muzzle. Sorrel was as much afraid as ever, yet he began to feel that she would

not hurt him. When she pressed the apple into his teeth, gently separating his lips, he did not resist. The man stuck a finger in between his teeth, in the back, and Sorrel opened his jaws. Then the young woman pressed the apple against his teeth so firmly, *that she broke its skin and some of the sweet juice ran into his mouth.* Sorrel licked it with his tongue and discovered that it was very good. When the young woman pressed the apple against his teeth again, he helped her with his upper jaw, and before he knew it, he had a bite of the apple in his mouth. He turned it over and over between his teeth as if he were afraid of it, shaking his head up and down as he did so; and the young man and the young woman laughed.

They did everything they could to make him eat the apple, and the more they did, the more he was afraid of it. Certainly they got more pleasure out of the operation than he did. When they started with him, back to the range fence, most of the apple was left in slimy, crushed bits, on the pebbles.

At the range fence, the man handed the rope over to the girl; and she, determined not to betray her trust, reinforced her hold on the rope, by throwing a fragrant arm about Sorrel's neck. The man cut the wires of the fence, and with the willing help of the girl, they pushed and pulled and dragged Sorrel back into the range. There, to his surprise, they took the rope off his neck and let him go.

Sorrel sprang off a few feet, and stopped. He couldn't believe that they had really let him go. Even when he saw them turn and go back to the fence, he was afraid that somehow they would get hold of him again. He trotted into the shadow

between two bushes. There he began to feel that they were not going to bother him any more. Tremblingly he went winding his way to the path that led up the steep canyon wall, and he hurried so fast, that by the time he got to the first ledge above the stunted trees, he was completely out of breath.

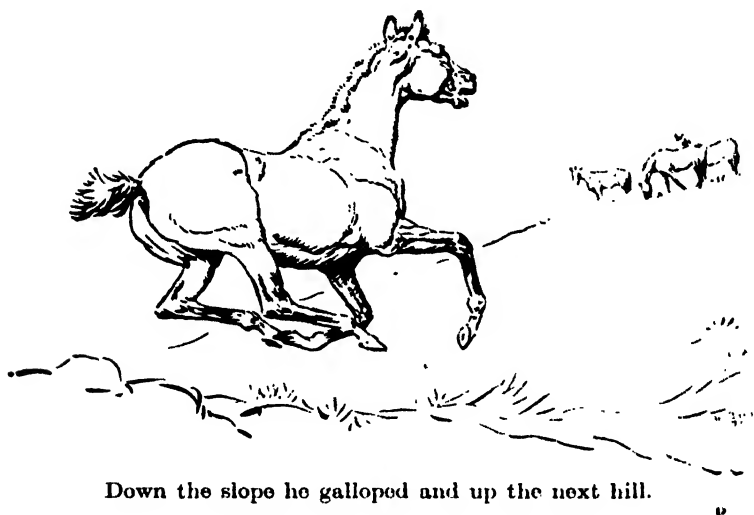
Stopping to rest there a moment, he turned to look back. He saw the young rancher and the girl moving about the fence. Feeling sure now that they were not coming after him, he was overcome with curiosity about them. He stepped back a pace to where he felt they would not see him, and watched them. He saw the man working on the wires ; then he saw him walk up to his saddle-pony which was now, somehow, beyond the fence, take hold of his reins and lead him back to the girl.

Suddenly taken with a sense of loneliness, Sorrel started anxiously up the slope, but a few yards higher up he stopped again. He saw both the man and the girl mounted on their ponies, riding away westward, together. He gazed after them with dilated eyes till he lost sight of them, then he turned and calling frantically to White, he went struggling on, up the canyon wall. He was sure he would see White as soon as he turned over the canyon lip ; but when he reached the stony area, and looking away over the empty spaces saw no sign of the herd, he became too much afraid even to cry. He was especially afraid of the stony area ; and he trotted tremblingly along the path, afraid of every stone, the very scanty grass seeming to creep and crawl like snakes.

When he finally got down into the next hollow, he

felt a bit better, though he did not like to be so far down, low. He turned and raced up the pointed hill on a lope; and, sure enough, he saw the herd on a round hill-top toward the centre of the range. His relief was so great, he could hardly contain himself. Down the slope he galloped and up the next hill, the joy in his heart spreading down to the very hoofs of his legs.

When at last he broke into the midst of the



Down the slope he galloped and up the next hill.

herd and had touched noses with White and Black and his mother, and the terror of his experience had fallen away from him, he turned his large eyes back towards the river. Looking away over the range spaces, he thought of the strangely soft sounds the girl had made, the odd odour that had come from her, the warmth of her cheek on his muzzle, the pungently sweet taste and the odour of the apple, the lustre in the penetrating, small eyes on these human faces, which were flat and bright like moonlight. It had been a strangely disturbing

experience, fraught with terror; and yet, he was very vaguely conscious of the fact that it would be interesting to experience it all again. An exotic tinge had come into the atmosphere of the range-land.

At every opportunity, after that lovely spring Sunday, Sorrel looked for these two fascinating beings, in the neighbourhood of the west fence. Time after time, he would sniff at the spot where they had stood, sniff at the broken wires of the fence where they had been retied, imagining that he could scent the odours of them, drawn to the spot by an overwhelming curiosity, a weird attachment. And yet, the first time he saw two riders, a man and a girl, he fled in terror, along with the rest, anxious to keep to the very midst of the herd.



## CHAPTER II

### SHIFTING SCENES ALONG THE RIVER

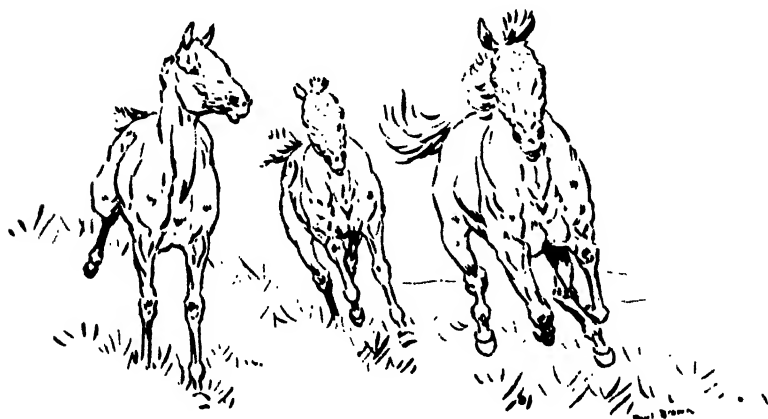
**D**URING the next two weeks, Sorrel seemed to grow visibly larger. His muscles hardened and strengthened, and the efficiency he acquired in tearing down the canyon slope, in swimming across the little stream to the sand-bar, in manipulating the treacherous rocks at the west fence, between the sand-bar and the shore, gave him a feeling of confidence, and a look of maturity. He ceased to be a mere follower of White, though his attraction for him became more intense with time. He took the lead whenever he could, often selecting the direction in which they were to go. And they were always going somewhere, searching for delicacies in grass, or just searching for adventure, the satisfaction of their oddly limitless curiosity.

Life fell into a steady pace of succeeding days and nights, filled with pleasure and excitement. Black's mother had begun driving him off when he tried to get milk from her, and he turned, naturally, to Sorrel and to White. The three became inseparable. In the dusky hours, they did their grazing rather near to the rest of the herd, often battering the air at dawn or at twilight, with the continuous tattoo of their hoofs, as they circled the hill or the hollow in which the herd was grazing; but during the day-

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time they would not be restrained in any way by the herd's phlegmatic willingness to remain in one spot and feed.

*There was not a hollow, not a stone, not a hill-top of the range that they did not explore and graze around. There was not a boulder in the canyon, not a clump of bushes, not a tree, not a bend in the river shore, that they did not investigate, sniff at, or paw. Every sandy spot they came to, they tried*



Sometimes, for the sheer joy of motion, they would lope and leap in a wild steeplechase across the range.

to roll upon. As soon as one, feeling exceptionally good, started to run, the other two ran with him, no matter what they happened to be interested in at the time. Sometimes, for the sheer joy of motion, they would lope and leap in a wild steeplechase across the range; and the old buckskin plug and some of the mares and the work-horses would look on as they ran, with unexpressed annoyance, as if they considered them scatter-brained and foolish. The old buckskin plug, with his swollen foot, was too rheumatic to enjoy running, the bay mare was

too watchful over her pinto colt to take part in anything; and the other mares and the work-horses, remembering the years of hard toil on the ranch fields, were too glad to be free from labour to subject their strained muscles to the exertion of reckless loping over space.

They were all down by the river taking their first morning drink, one lovely day in March, when they were surprised by the sudden appearance of a man on horseback, on the trail that ran parallel to the east fence of the range. Sorrel caught sight of him just as he was turning down the canyon lip, but some of the older horses had already trotted away westward along the shore of the stream, and White was already in the middle of the stream, straining for the sand-bar. Both Black and Sorrel plunged in after him.

On the sand-bar the three of them raced like the wind, the clods of sand shooting backwards from their hoofs, splashing into the water. At the first break in the sand-bar, Sorrel stopped to look back a moment, as White was doing. He saw one of the riders out-reach the herd and turn them all back eastward, and he also saw the second rider come trotting along the shore, slowly, but unmistakably pursuing them. Sorrel was young and strong and swift. White and Black were there with him. He not only had confidence in his ability to outrun the man, but the touching experience he had had that Sunday with the man and the girl made it difficult for him to worry too much. He remembered the fragrance of the woman's cheek, the kindness in her voice and touch, the sweetness of the apple, and above all, he remembered that they had let him go ;

and he felt quite sure that this man would not hurt them.

Near the west fence, the three colts stopped; and with heads raised, ears pricked, and eyes shining like the water that lapped the stones, they studied their pursuer who was coming unexcitedly along the river shore.

A hundred yards or so, east of where the colts were standing, the man stopped and to their surprise and alarm began shouting angrily to them. Sorrel sidled up to White, and Black rubbed close against Sorrel. White raised his beautiful head high, and continuing to glare at the man a moment, did something that appeared to Sorrel a very strange thing to do. His head erect, his legs like darts shooting at the sand-bar, he started back eastward, evidently intending to get out of the corner where the man had them trapped. But the man was not willing to let him get back to the wide range where the chase would be more difficult. As soon as he saw White turn, he plunged into the stream towards the sand-bar.

White, at once, turned round again, and started nervously over the jagged rocks to the shore. While Sorrel picked his way right behind White, he saw through the side of his eye that the man had returned to the shore and was standing still, watching them.

As soon as he struck the shore, White leaped for the trail near the west fence and started up the incline to the range above, both colts immediately behind him. When they got to the first ledge, Sorrel turned to look back. Over Black's bobbing head, he saw the man on horseback, hardly a dozen feet below.

On the range above, White became panicky. With the man so close to him, he was determined to keep away from the trail and the fence. Out in the open, he instinctively felt he had a better chance to escape. Accordingly, he struck out across the stony area. Despite the frequent stones and the instinctive fear of snakes that the place gave them, having regained their wind, no longer on the steep incline, they loped like deer.

They had swept completely across the stony area to where the ridge fell away into the hollow, when the man succeeded in getting off to the side, sufficiently to worry them. Instead of going toward the trail, however, as he knew the man wanted him to, White turned back across the stony area.

The colts were racing wildly. They could hear the shouting of the man, as his saddle-pony strained behind them. Suddenly White leaped sideways into the air. Sorrel stopped dead still, in time to see a rattler, coiled on a flat stone, no more than a few feet ahead of him. As he stopped, he saw Black go running on, right at the rattler.

White had turned to the left now, at last heading for the trail. In the excitement, White had gotten several rods ahead of Sorrel; and the man on horseback, swift in pursuit of White, had broken in, between him and Sorrel. What with the horrible feeling of the presence of snakes, the man was fast chasing White out of reach. White was already so far away, that Sorrel felt the dread of being alone. He turned to Black and called frantically. **Black** was some ten feet away, coming in his direction, but coming slowly, and shaking his head up and down peculiarly. Sorrel tried to urge him to hasten away

from the forbidden area, but Black only bobbed his head. To induce him to go faster, Sorrel loped swiftly away ; but when he stopped to look back, Black was coming as slowly as before, his tongue reaching out of his mouth in a way that alarmed him.

Sorrel trotted back to his companion, the skin quivering all over his body with the feeling that the ground was creeping with snakes he didn't see. As he called to him, he sniffed at him, and the odour



Black was coming up the slope of the pointed hill, coming very slowly.

that came to him terrified him so, he leaped away again and he raced this time, till he got off the stony ground.

Down in the hollow, he stopped to wait for Black, but he could not endure remaining down there. Up the pointed hill he raced, calling frenziedly as he ran. He saw Black coming laboriously down the incline from the ridge ; and in the south he saw White, now nearly a mile away, running along the west trail, the man on horseback close behind him. He wanted to race after White, to be with him ;

but he was concerned about Black, and he didn't like the idea of racing across the range spaces, all alone. He turned and called feelingly to Black. Black was now coming up the slope of the pointed hill, coming very slowly, his muzzle so low, it almost touched the ground.

Sorrel started down towards him, hesitatingly, his dilated eyes glaring at him, his whinnies issuing from him half-heartedly. Poor Black struggled hard to get up to him, but some fifty feet from the peak of the pointed hill, he stopped, his head moving up and down uncannily, standing shakily, as if his strength had given out.

Sorrel approached him with dreadful awe, calling louder now, urging him to come with him. Black made a start as if he intended coming, and then to Sorrel's dismay, he began to lower himself to the ground. A paralysing discomfort took hold of Sorrel. He stopped where he was and looked on helplessly. He saw Black make an attempt to rise again, then he saw him stretch out flat.

Sorrel turned and raced up to the peak of the hill. He knew that something unthinkably horrible was happening to Black, something which he vaguely connected with the coiled rattler that he had seen, and with the coming of the man. He looked appealingly in the direction in which he had seen White last, but there was no sign of him anywhere. Wherever he looked, the beloved rangeland had been desolated.

He turned back to Black. He would go down there and he would nudge him and urge him to get up and run. But he found poor Black prone on the hillside, his head stretched one way, his tail the

other, now absolutely motionless. There was a finality about this motionlessness that apprised Sorrel of the fact that Black was not merely asleep. He called to him as he tremblingly approached his lifeless body, but he didn't expect any answer. When he sniffed at his muzzle there came to him a queer, strong feeling of snakes; and he leaped sideways and ran half-way down to the hollow before he could stop himself.

*But he could not leave Black and run away from him.* Again he trotted up the incline. A few feet away, he stopped and stared. There did not appear to be a single thing crawling or creeping from him; and so he ventured right up to him again. He would nudge him with his muzzle and get him to rise and run with him to search for White and the rest of the herd.

He approached very carefully, avoiding Black's muzzle and with his nose he pushed gently at his. There was something frightful about the touch of it. He sniffed fearfully all along Black's back. The ears were stiff, the eyes were glassy, and the muzzle half-open. Sorrel sprang away from the ghastly head, and without going up to the peak again, he raced for the west trail, and fled southward, calling nervously as he loped, afraid of every shadow, afraid of every bush that swayed in the tiny breeze.

When he came to the south-west corner of the range, he was surprised to find the barbed-wire gate that always stretched across the opening into the avenue between the two barbed-wire fences, thrown to the side. The ground, around the mouth of the avenue, reeked with the scent of many hoofs.



Sorrel knew that White had been there, and that he had entered the avenue.

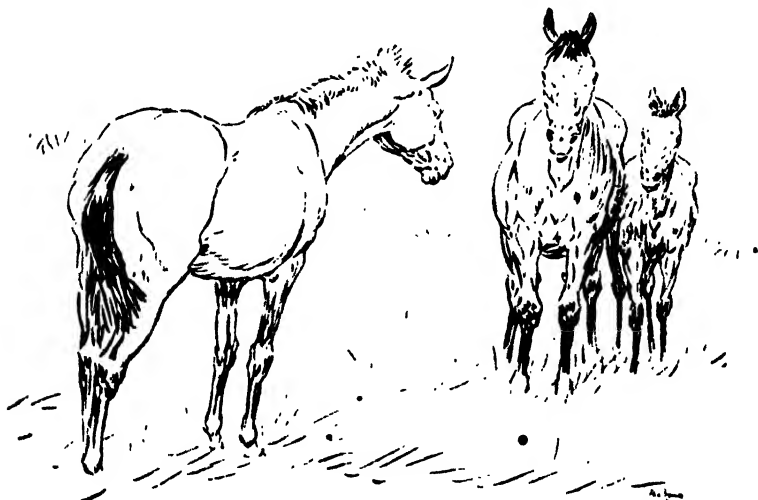
Driven by his desperate desire to find White, he ventured nervously into the avenue between the two wire fences. At first he went very slowly, a step at a time ; then finding that there was nothing anywhere but motionless barbed wire, and dead posts at intervals, he increased his pace. He trotted fearfully all the way up to the knob, and there he stopped dead still, beholding a sight that staggered him.

In the shallow hollow before him, he saw a welter of things and shadows and motion, that he did not even attempt to understand. House and barn, and corral, even with the very horses he was so anxious to see, seemed to whirl around in a dizzying motion, and sounds that frightened him to death, came roaring across the spaces. He turned and fled ; and until he was deep in the heart of the range, surrounded by lifeless hill-tops, he did not stop to look back.

He was glad that no one was pursuing him, but his loneliness was driving him frantic. With the feeling that he might find some of the herd down at the river he galloped away to the east trail. At the canyon lip, he stopped and looked down. Into the sunny mists hanging over the river, a terrifying gloominess had entered. The only life visible down the dismal canyon, was the moving of the broad river as it swept westward with a threatening swish against the sand-bar.

Never in his life had he suffered such intense loneliness. It was as if the entire race of living things had been swept from the earth, but himself.

It bewildered him. He hardly knew what he was doing. First he turned and galloped back towards the south-west corner of the range, then half-way across he stopped and turned again towards the river, then a quarter of a mile from the canyon lip he thought of Black and turned west again. He would go and see whether it wasn't possible to arouse Black and make him get up and run with him. As



Sorrel approached the bay mare, whinnying cordially.

he ran, driven by this faint hope, he came to a hill-top from where he beheld, with great joy and relief, the bay mare, her pinto colt and the old buckskin plug, all that was left of the herd, down in the hollow, looking up his way, with evident alarm.

They were as nervous as he was, and as soon as he started down the slope, they galloped away northward, up the next incline, frightened by his speed and his protestations of good-will. By the time he had overtaken the old buckskin plug, however, the

bay mare realized that he was harmless and stopped to wait for him. Getting in front of her little daughter, the bay mare faced Sorrel with an inquisitive look.

As Sorrel approached the bay mare, whinnying cordially, the little pinto came around from behind her mother, and rubbing her fat little side against her mother's side, she looked on, interestedly, as they sniffed noses. Still standing where Sorrel had overtaken him, the buckskin plug stood looking on, his head raised high, an air of pride about him, as if he felt that in the turmoil of the day, he had outwitted man. He did not know that the rancher's kindness had pensioned him off to his last stretch of life on the range, free from the toil that had made an old horse of him.

As soon as the bay mare was assured that Sorrel had had no one pursuing him, she started back, down the hollow, where the grass was better. But Sorrel wanted them to go searching with him for White and Black. He called to them, ran away a few rods, stopped, looked back and called again; but they would raise their heads, regard him with puzzled looks on their faces, and go back to their grazing.

Sorrel was restless with concern for Black and eagerness to see White. It seemed impossible to remain inactive and graze. He trotted all the way up to the hill-top in the west, but from there the plains looked so desolate, that he bethought himself, and slowly and reluctantly went back to the bay mare and her filly. All afternoon, however, he kept repeating his futile attempts to induce them to go searching with him; then, later in the day, when

the shadows had begun to grow long, and the evening's peacefulness had cast a mist of unreality over the experiences of the day, Sorrel managed to lead the little group down to the river.

But there, the bay mare and her filly, and the old buckskin plug drank all the water they cared for, and then merely strolled about the canyon bottom and the river bed, a lazy step this way, and a lazier one back, refusing to travel westward as Sorrel wanted them to. Time after time, he started off, calling as he went, going deep into the evening shadows, till the fear of being alone drove him back to his phlegmatic companions.

The group went back up the canyon wall, and grazed listlessly for several hours on the range above. Sorrel always a short distance away from the others, tearing off a mouthful of grass, then lifting his head and looking into the sombre spaces, calling to the others to go with him, knowing full well that they would not do so.

In the middle of the night, a strong wind arose, and black clouds sailed like hostile ships over the sky space above the canyon. It began to sprinkle, the wind carrying the drops with such force that they stung when they struck the delicate skin of the muzzle. The drops fell faster and faster. The sky became darker, and it was hardly possible to see a horse standing more than a dozen feet away.

They moved down into the canyon, and with heads lowered and backs humped, they walked to the overhanging boulder. There on a small grass ledge, from which the grass had been cropped, they lay down, as the rain beat with greater and greater

fury, muttering softly, one trying to push close into the other.

Sorrel lay down as close to the little pinto filly as he dared, so close that he could feel the warmth of her body and that delightfully thrilling redolence which had already taken its place in his mind as a symbol of her, like a name. It was a restless night to Sorrel, however. Formless fears, like half-seen creatures of evil, hovered about the dark mass of Black, which did not leave his mind a moment; and the frightened, loping form of White persisted all night long in its race through his mind, the man on horseback shouting behind him. And yet, with all these fears, and the certainty of his experience, he felt, at certain moments, that when the rain-storm was over and the night had gone, he would find both White and Black and continue the happy state, so rudely shattered that morning.

Daylight came slowly and drably, and the roaring river cut its silver streak out of the night. They got up and went down to the river for water, and part of the morning they spent on the range grazing; but by noon-time, it had begun to rain hard again; and so they returned to the ledge under the overhanging boulder. The old buckskin plug was there on the ledge, ahead of them, when they got there, and he had chosen the best place to lie on, but they did not quarrel over it. They pushed their way close to him, and all afternoon, Sorrel lay dozing and gazing from out the shadow under the boulder, at the river that swept its white stream across the grey bleakness of the dismal day. His feelings kept changing semi-consciously as his own sensations moved through his mind, and the mists

moved through the canyon, now obliterating the trees on the opposite side of the river, now revealing them. In the gloomy coldness, the warmth of little Pinto beside him, the sweet scent of her body, gave promise of fullness for the new period that was coming over his life, a new existence from which Black and White were kept out.

The rain, now a downpour, now a drizzle, continued fitfully for more than a week. Daily and nightly they came to the ledge under the overhanging boulder. Sorrel lay there for hours in the coziness and comfort of Pinto's nearness, watching the river as it poured down the canyon bottom.

In this melancholy period, the fire of friendship smouldered, and in its darkness, love kindled. Hardly aware of it, Sorrel was very rapidly forgetting his two friends of early spring; and there was no hard-heartedness in this swift forgetting. It was as it should be. There was no more purpose in bewailing the loss, than in railing against the rain-storm which had kept him from searching for them, when the need for them was fresh and urgent. Where White and Black had been, Pinto was. Changes like these must ever be. If the stream of life is to run at all, it must move to new scenes. Scenes must forever shift along the shores of every river.

## CHAPTER III

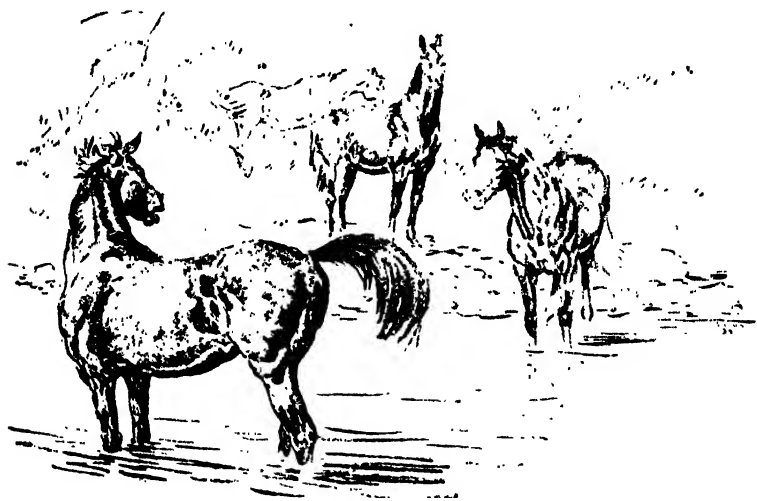
### LOVE

**T**HE forces that had been welding Sorrel to Pinto, had also been welding Pinto to Sorrel. While he could not, as yet, lead her away from her mother, Pinto began to start away with him, as soon as he loped off in any direction. Her mother, seeing her go, would call to her fervently, and she would stop in the middle distance between them, looking distractedly first one way and then the other, held by both ties.

One very lovely morning, while the bay mare and the old buckskin plug continued drinking by the river, Sorrel splashed into the little stream, starting across to the sand-bar. The river had lowered considerably, and it was not necessary to swim at any one point, in crossing. As he waded through the stream, noisily, Sorrel kept calling to Pinto. He could hear the frantic calling of the bay mare, as he did so. Still a bit uncertain, where the water was up to his shoulders, he did not turn to look back, till he had clambered up the sand-bar. When he got to the sand-bar and began shaking the water from his body, he was surprised to see the lovely little head of Pinto, a few feet behind him, coming pantingly right after him.

Thus encouraged, Sorrel trotted off westward down the sand-bar, calling to Pinto as he went.

But before he got to the first break in the sand-bar, he knew that Pinto was not with him. Turning around, he saw her a hundred feet behind him, on the bar, looking across the stream to her mother, who stood on the shore, calling to her. As soon as she saw him stop, Pinto splashed into the stream back to the shore. Sorrel went racing after her, but he had the feeling now, that one day soon, she would go off with him, wherever he wanted to go.



As he waded through the stream, noisily, Sorrel kept calling to Pinto.

Every day, Pinto went farther with him, from her mother. One time she followed him westward on the sand-bar to the very west fence of the range; there she turned and raced back to her mother, whinnying loudly as if she had been hurt; and yet, that very afternoon she followed him clear to the lip of the canyon, on the arduous trail than ran parallel to the west fence, before the want-of-mother



panic seized her. Then finally, several days later, she went loping with him over the range, as if she had been in the habit of leaving her mother, all her life.

It was the happiest day Sorrel had had since White and Black had gone out of his life. Like children they loped over the old trails, sniffing at everything, secure in each other's presence, hilarious with the wine of healthiness that bubbled in every drop of their energetic blood. They went speeding away along the west trail to the south-west corner of the range fence, to where the barbed-wire gate had been re-shut. There as they stood looking into the avenue between the wires, Sorrel pushed his head between two of the strands and nipped a few unimportant blades of grass, just to "show-off" before Pinto as White had "showed-off" before him.

He was uncomfortable there, however, and leading Pinto away, he raced wildly without order or purpose, coming abruptly upon the pointed hill. A change came over Sorrel as he started down into the hollow before the pointed hill. His gambolling spirit gave way to a seriousness that puzzled and frightened Pinto. His legs began striking the ground with a nervous tautness, his ears went up straight and forward, and his eyes dilated. But Pinto was too far from her mother to leave him. She only moved closer to him, and sniffed the air nervously as she went.

Half-way up the incline, Sorrel stopped so abruptly, that Pinto ran into him. Before him, not far from the peak of the pointed hill, lay a dark heap, which he knew at once was what remained of Black. Pinto sprang sideways with a cry, turning

and running down into the hollow. Frightened by her, Sorrel ran after her, but before he reached her, he stopped and called to her. When she, hearing him, turned to him, he also turned, and again trotted up to the heap on the slope. He approached the hideous mess slowly, stopping often to look back and make sure that Pinto was not running away. Always as soon as he saw that she was waiting for him, he took several steps up, nearer the heap, sniffing, horrified by the frightful miasma of death which came from the thing, but certain that Black was there, half-expecting him to rise and go back down the hill with him.

He went right up to the spot, drawn to it as by physical force, but the coyotes had been at the carcass, and the sight and the smell of stale blood was too much for him. He turned so suddenly and raced so swiftly that he startled Pinto, who swerved from him at an angle, and galloped away over the range.

On the clean hills beyond the smell of the pointed hill, the gambolling spirit took hold of them again. Sorrel played with Pinto as joyfully as he might ; but he stopped his activities constantly and turning back in the direction of the pointed hill, he would look and look and sniff and sniff, to Pinto's obvious misunderstanding.

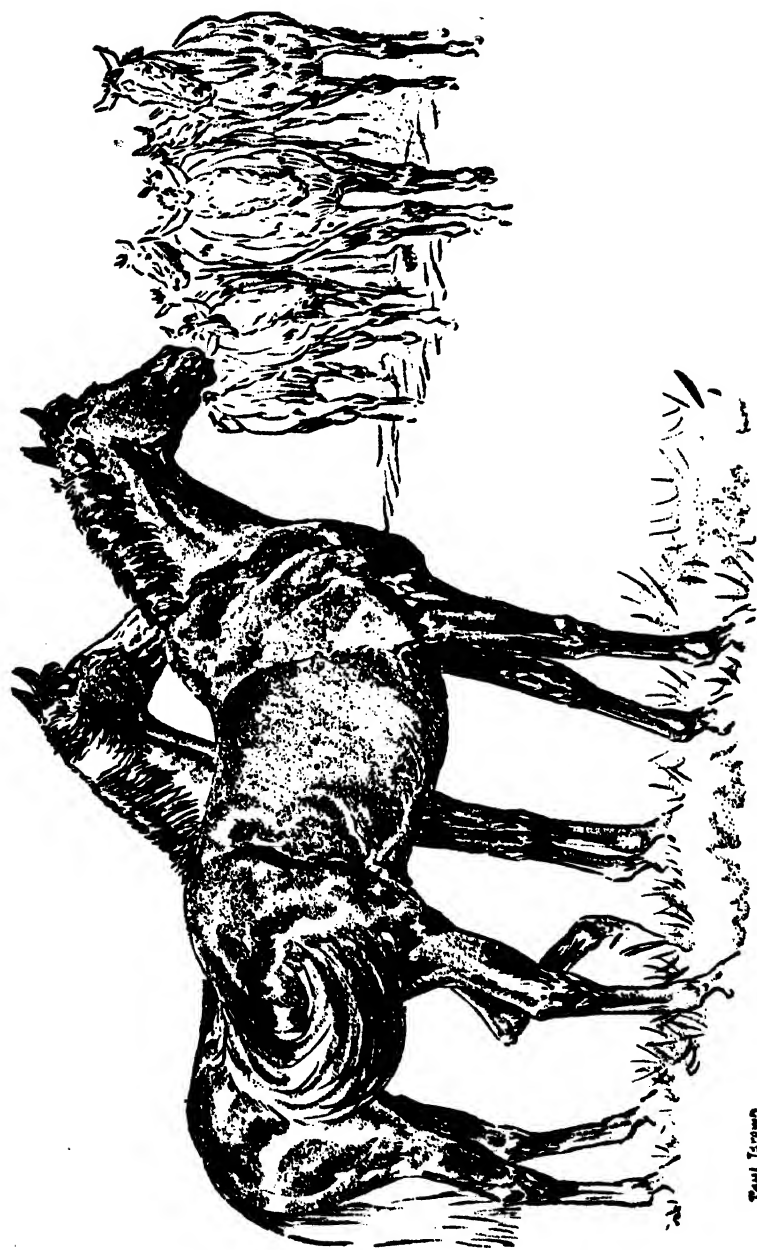
In the days that followed, Sorrel led Pinto again and again over the same course, across the stream, down the sand-bar, over the jagged rocks, up the steep canyon wall, across the stony area, to the pointed hill. But Pinto always remained in the hollow, unwilling to follow him up the horrible incline. In time, her manner discouraged Sorrel's

morbid curiosity, and their trips for adventure took other directions altogether. Then one day, late in the summer, gambolling over the vast range, racing wildly from hill-top to hill-top, they came tearing up the pointed hill together. Where Black had fallen, lay a heap of bones surrounded by a fringe of tall grasses. The coyotes having devoured every bit of the flesh, the bones lay clean, bleaching white in the sun. The horror of death seemed to have gone from them, and Sorrel approached nearer and nearer, and Pinto went reluctantly with him.

Before the summer was over, they had become quite capable of grazing on that slope. The bay mare and the buckskin plug came to the hollow quite often with them, and one time Sorrel saw the old buckskin plug go lumbering up the incline, as if he were bent on most important business. He saw him stop a few feet away from Black's bones and sniff with his ugly long neck extended before him, then turn with apparent repulsion and go lumbering down into the hollow again.

The bay mare ceased trying to keep her filly at her side, quite content with such companionship as she got from the old buckskin plug, limping along behind her. Both of the two older horses invariably started out with Sorrel and Pinto and just as invariably dropped off to graze, where the grass appeared especially interesting.

Not even with White and Black, had Sorrel explored the range as he did now with Pinto. He knew every rock and bush, every tree, every bend in the river; and much as his mind disturbed itself with faint visions of White and Black, and his big, red mother, in strangely gripping sensations that



In the lead of the somewhat bedraggled group, came a white horse.

Paul T. Brown  
1873



came abruptly out of nowhere, his life was richer and fuller than it had ever been.

The delightfully sunny summer months came to an end. Came long, gloomy rain-storms and wind-storms; the river swelled, and its gentle lapping turned back into a roar. The little group took to the ledge under the overhanging boulder, and many a cold blustery hour they spent indulging in the luxurious warmth of each other's bodies, the silver grey and white foam of the river, passing before their half-seeing eyes, lulling them to sleep.

The grass, brown for weeks, grew grey, and the dried leaves along the river bed fluttered helplessly in the changing winds. Dried thistles rolled up and down the hills like living things, gathering in heaps wherever something offered a catch or a hold; and the last time Sorrel came upon Black's bleached bones they were nearly covered with tan dry thistles.

They were grazing on a knoll-top, one autumn day, when looking up, Sorrel saw a group of horses coming slowly from the south-west corner of the range. Sorrel watched them come anxiously. Worried by what their coming might mean, he was also glad to see them come. The vast range, in the autumn winds, had appeared desolate and forsaken with but the old buckskin plug and the old bay mare. Sorrel studied the new-comers till he was assured that there were no men riding any of them; then, Pinto close behind him, he trotted forward, cautiously, to meet them.

In the lead of the somewhat bedraggled group, came a white horse, his white fur spotted with barn stains. To Sorrel, something in his manner and bearing awakened memories of feelings experienced

and enjoyed before, but when quite close, he smelled the offensive barn odours that clung to him, and noted the almost contemptuous indifference on his part. He backed away and let them go by. The entire group appeared worn-out and ill-humoured, making with a dogged determination for the canyon and the river, their heads low, their ears going back rather readily.

Nevertheless, when the group had gone by, Sorrel and Pinto, the bay mare and the old buckskin plug who had joined them, turned and followed them, a few feet in the rear. Nor were the newcomers any more kindly disposed after they had gotten their drinks at the river shore. They bickered constantly among themselves and especially seemed to enjoy picking on the old buckskin plug; but not one of them dared make himself offensive to Sorrel or to Pinto.

For some time after these work-horses had joined them, Sorrel maintained an intense interest in White, continuing to stare at him and to study him when he walked or grazed. He remembered him quite well and yet regarded him as another horse; and if his revived affections would have led him to remake the old friendly relationship, his jealous watching over Pinto would have prevented it. At the same time his remembered emotions tugged at the puzzled Sorrel and aroused vague and nameless fears. Blindly he made a connection in his mind between the something repellent in the White he had adored, and the coming of man and the death of Black. For a long time after White's return, he kept turning his gaze toward the south-west corner of the range, sniffing and looking, feeling that from

the direction whence these work-horses had come, bedraggled and sour-tempered, other troubles would emanate.

At the end of a week, a change had come over the work-horses. The stains and the smells of their ranch life had worn away. They ran more willingly, partook of the pleasures of gambolling a bit more readily, and quarrelled among themselves much less frequently. While White and one or two of the younger work-horses often joined Sorrel and Pinto in some of their escapades, most of the others kept in a group in the hollows where the wind wasn't so biting.

The fall rains gave way to snow flurries, and the snow flurries gave way to blizzards. The country was buried deep in winter snow and the river, beyond the rapids, froze solid. During the long, cold nights, wearied by the daily digging through many feet of snow for grass, they spent much time dozing on the ledge under the overhanging boulder, or in the lee of some clump of bushes or trees.

The winter moved by slowly and dismally ; and yet the long dark nights began growing perceptibly shorter. Warm suns began melting away the deep snows, and smiling streamlets began racing down the canyon walls, their joyousness turning, in spots, to boisterous laughter. The business of digging for grass became easier as the snows dwindled, and Sorrel and Pinto turned their attentions again to adventure. While the work-horses, having learned from bitter experience, that in the spring-time man came to take them back to slavery, evinced a nervousness that spoiled their pleasures in the coming of the new season, Sorrel and Pinto innocently



abandoned themselves to the ecstasies of speed and motion. Over the soft, oozing earth they raced like spirits in the moonlight, their heads high, their manes fluttering in the breeze of their own fleetness.

A thousand times, to the dismay of the rest of the herd, Sorrel and Pinto swam the swollen small stream to the narrow strip of sand-bar, racing up and down the bar, east and west, slipping into the current when their hoofs tore away sand which was undermined by the water, performing like mad actors for the adulation of their stolid companions.

And then man appeared, completely surprising them. They had gone down to the river for their early morning drink. The entire herd had followed Sorrel and Pinto along the river bed westward, and up the steep path along the west fence of the range, when as Sorrel turned over the lip of the canyon, he was electrified by the sound of strange hoof-beats. As he turned nervously to look back, he discovered two men on horseback on the river shore, less than fifty feet from the trail. At the same time, the herd broke over the edge of the canyon behind him in confusion.

Sorrel hesitated a moment. He did not want to continue on the trail, the old instinctive feeling that man had him at a disadvantage there, urging him to turn across the stony area and reach out for the range, and if possible go back to the river ; but he was also afraid of the snakes on the stony area. Memory of the tragic death of Black suddenly became bright in his mind.

They turned back to the trail, galloped swiftly over the stony area and down the slope of the ridge, turning in the hollow, intending to strike out into

the heart of the range, along the side of the pointed hill, but coming to an abrupt stop. There on a knoll beyond the pointed hill was another horseman watching them. As they turned back to the west trail, they saw the two horsemen they had seen down in the canyon, come loping down the slope from the stony area behind them.

Of course Sorrel was obliged to take the west trail and go loping away southward as the men wanted him to go. And yet he was not giving up by any means. He raced with all possible speed, determined to get so far ahead of the men that he could turn before they could head him off. A mischievous playfulness came into the snort with which he tossed his head, and into the glow that sparkled in his large round eyes. Power, swiftness was his now -- he was not afraid.

But the man at his left was wise enough to anticipate him. Since he could not quite keep up with this wild young stallion, he loped southward at an angle, going off from the trail, rather than toward it, so that should Sorrel attempt to turn east, the only direction he could turn in, he could the more easily head him off. And of the two men who pursued the herd along the trail, one of them turned off toward the east, keeping at equal distance from either of the two other riders.

By the time Sorrel, with the herd behind him, reached the south-west corner of the range, the horsemen appeared in a cordon an eighth of a mile behind him. He was trapped. There was nothing for him to do but enter the avenue between the barbed-wire fences, the gate to which had been left open. He hesitated a moment, looked back

nervously to see if there wasn't still some way of avoiding the trap ; but the three men came loping towards them with a threatening, forbidding patter of hoofs, and he plunged into the avenue and raced up the pathway to the knoll.

Until they reached the knoll, the protuberances beyond it had appeared a long way off ; but as soon as they reached the summit of that slope, the ranch buildings seemed to have been drawn with miraculous swiftness towards them. Sorrel stopped, terrified. Right before him, hardly a hundred yards from where he stood gazing with swollen eyes, was the corral and the teeming ranch yard : behind him, behind the nervous herd, rode the three horsemen, abreast, completely shutting off their retreat. He did think of breaking through the wires at his side and running eastward and back to his beloved river, but he had had too many experiences with barbed wire to try that.

The confusing motion of things in the yard, the welter of lights and shadows and colours, the conglomerate mass of sounds, and the overwhelming waves of odours, completely bewildered Sorrel. Yet, head erect, eyes glaring, he was pushed forward into the corral by the very pressure of the herd behind him.

But when the gate of the corral was shut upon them, and Sorrel realized that he was really trapped, he went wild. He began racing around the corral space as if he had lost all sense of direction, without plan or purpose, blindly expressing his blind resentment in mere motion, churning up the dust, the herd helplessly following him.

The dust which rose in clouds from their feet

began choking them, and Pinto began slowing down. Sorrel would not run without her. They stopped in the corner where the gate barred their way into the avenue between the barbed-wire fences. Pinto held her head low, her muzzle between two of the logs of the corral wall, panting for breath; but Sorrel raised his head high, above the topmost beam and gazed into the overwhelmingly mysterious play of light and shadow and motion in the ranch yard, where the riders had dismounted. Near them stood the horses they had ridden, horses like himself and Pinto, apparently not the least afraid, their heads lowered, the black straps dangling from their bridle rings.

When the men turned again to their ponies, they slapped them resoundingly on their necks, but the ponies showed no signs of resentment. They led them to the watering trough where the water dripped sparkingly to the ground, and there, while they drank, Sorrel saw one of the men stroking the neck and shoulders of his horse. There was nothing alluring in this scene to Sorrel, however. He wanted none of it, no matter how contented the saddle ponies appeared to be; and he waited through the dragging hours in the hope that something would happen to let him go back to the rangeland where he belonged, to the canyon and the sparkling river.

Suddenly the door of the house opened and a young woman, brilliant with colour, appeared, her voice thinner and higher pitched than the voices of the men, who had been shouting to one another. A tall man, standing in the barn doorway, called to her. Strange sounds of laughter reverberating through space, the woman walked down to the

middle of the yard, where the man met her, and both of them turned toward the corral. Sorrel raised his graceful head high with alarm and apprehension.

They came directly to the spot, along the corral wall, on the other side of which he was standing. Sorrel tossed his head angrily and trotted off to the other wall. The man remained where he was, but the woman lowered herself under the barbed-wire fence and appeared again, directly in front of Sorrel, calling to him softly. Sorrel was about to go off again to another wall, when a light arose in his obscured consciousness which held him fascinated, to the spot. He had the feeling that he had had a similar experience. His nostrils distended as he took in the aroma that emanated from her. Sensations of that distant Sunday became clearer in his mind. He remembered himself stuck in a mass of bushes, remembered the man's strong offensive arm round his neck, remembered the soft fragrant touch of a warm cheek, and remembered the strangely sweet taste of an apple, forced into his mouth.

His eyes dilated till they appeared, to the woman, twice their normal size. So fascinated was he by the stream of half-forgotten sensations that issued as from her and bombarded his senses, that he did not notice that the man had quietly joined the woman. They began to talk in low tones.

"Isn't he the loveliest thing?" muttered the woman, afraid that she would frighten him away. "Remember that Sunday, Ed?"

"He'll make a dandy saddle-pony," said the man, after smiling his reply.

"Remember your promise? I ride 'im first."

"We got t' tame 'im first, though, Floss!"

"I mean when you've tamed 'im. I jus' hate to think o' breakin' 'im, Ed. Don't hurt 'im any more'n you have to, will y'u, Ed?"

The tall man looked down at the expression of pain on the woman's face. He loved her for her sympathetic nature, though cruel necessity had dulled much of that in himself.

"We don' hurt 'im much," the young man assured her, though he could see he was not convincing. "Anyway, in a few days, it's all over. Y'u still think o' callin' 'im Prince?"

"You bet," she replied feelingly. "He helped me find my prince, didn't he?"

The woman pushed her hand through between two beams in the wall and held out a bright, orange object towards Sorrel, which had a faintly sweet smell. Sorrel had backed off some distance from the wall, he backed a few paces farther. Then the woman threw the object towards him. It fell right in front of him, but before he had lowered his head to sniff at it, one of the work-horses, less timid than he, seized it and went off with it. The woman and the man then walked away.

When they were gone, Sorrel sniffed at the ground where the orange object had fallen. He had never tasted carrots before, but the scent on the ground made him wish he had gotten it. He walked to the corral wall, where the woman's hand had appeared, and sniffed at the beams, then he raised his head high and looked after his two visitors who were entering the house by the back door. He licked his lips with an energetic tongue, his mind

struggling with a vague sense of regret. The house door shut with a bang, and the last flicker of the light that had arisen went out. In the darkness of the immediate problem of getting out of that corral trap, the nervous restlessness came back upon him threefold.

Again he swung into a circulating trot around the corral, Pinto and most of the rest of the horses following him, churning up the dust again, tormenting their thirsty throats with added irritation. He continued his foolish racing till no one would race with him, then finding a spot next to Pinto, along the north wall of the corral, he rested his neck upon the topmost beam of the corral and looked longingly back toward the rangeland, licking his dry lips with his tongue, harassed by sensations of cool water dripping down raw earth slopes, sensations of water caressing his sides, sensations of loping freely over unobstructed space.

The monotonous hours of the long day wore away toward evening. The shadows began stretching out. For a while there was a noisy stirring of men and things about the yard; and then two of the men mounted their saddle-ponies and rode away. Sorrel watched them go and listened to the patter of their hoof-beats.

The creatures about the yard, the chickens, the pigs, and even the dog withdrew from sight. The quietness that settled down upon the ranch yard, coming with the cool evening, when running wildly over space is such a joy, only fanned the fire of resentment in Sorrel's heart against the limitations of the corral walls. He began pushing at the unyielding beams with anger and force. These



Ho lead the herd in a single wave against the corral gate.





walls were unlike the pricking barbs of the range fence. He could hurl himself at them without suffering pain, and derive some sort of satisfaction from the creaking of timber. When he found the wall too firm in one spot, he walked off a few paces and tried again. Round and round the corral he went with infinite patience, throwing himself against the hated hold of wood, pushing, pressing, looking longingly upon the free world just outside of the torturing enclosure.

Things were losing their details in the descending dusk, when the dog suddenly reappeared and began to bark, running forward and backward as he barked. The house door opened and the tall young rancher came out. He walked slowly toward the centre of the yard, quieted the dog, and stopped still, gazing away into space. Sorrel watched him concernedly, the entire herd having crowded over to him; and as he watched, he became aware of a strange sound, a rattle and a chugging, which was growing perceptibly louder, as he listened.

The horses all became nervous, trotting around the corral space, stopping to look westward, whence the sound was coming. Then, as Sorrel looked with them, he saw a horrible, monstrous creature come racing over a knob, charging directly upon the corral. In full view, its noise seemed to have been magnified many times, and it puffed and snorted and sent angry clouds in alarming floods and curves into the air. A most pungently unpleasant stench preceded it, pervading the evening air.

Sorrel remained standing on his trembling legs, until the thing came within a few feet of the corral, then turning, he led the herd in a single wave

against the corral gate. There was a loud crack of snapping wood, and the gate swung open and back against the corral wall with a loud report. Before the gate could swing back into place, the whole group was out in the avenue between the two wire fences, pouring like a spring-swollen stream, back to the rangeland, the sound of the motor-cycle still battering at space and silence.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE REFUGE OF THE RIVER

**F**ORTUNATELY for Sorrel and the frightened band that raced after him, the rancher had left open the barbed-wire gate from the avenue between the wire fences into the range, intending to send the old buckskin plug and one or two of the mares and their colts back by themselves, after he had selected the various horses that he meant to keep on the ranch.

Sorrel made sure of but one thing and that was that Pinto was with him; for the rest, he placed all his faith and hope in his legs. Back in the range, he raced diagonally across it, making for the trail along the east fence. At the canyon lip, he stopped to look back, to see whether the enemy was coming after him. He made out old Buckskin, limping laboriously some distance behind, and in between Buckskin and the canyon lip, he saw, here and there, shadows of the other horses and mares, but the man was apparently making no attempt to pursue them.

Breathing a bit easier, Sorrel led the way down the canyon wall to the river. There they drank till the weight of the water they had drunk made it difficult for them to move about. It was their good fortune that the rancher had decided not to go after them until morning, for heavy as they were with

water, he should have had little trouble rounding them up again.

As soon as it had grown real dark they went back to the range above, where they grazed most of the night. While Sorrel grazed peacefully enough, he was too wary to abandon his watchfulness altogether, and as the grey hours of morning approached, he increased his vigilance and moved nearer and nearer to the river. And just as he had instinctively expected, the sun had barely cleared the tallest of the tree points, when he saw two horsemen loping towards them from the south-west corner of the range.

Down the narrow path went Sorrel, tense with excitement, the entire herd at his heels. On the canyon bottom, he turned westward along the river shore, loping recklessly over stones and wind-falls and around trees and bushes and boulders. He had almost covered the entire width of the range river-front when he stopped abruptly. In front of him, on the path at the extreme west side of the range, one of the two horsemen he had seen was just turning down into the canyon.

Sorrel tossed his head angrily and, turning, he broke through the herd behind him and raced as fast and as recklessly back eastward again. Then as he rounded a clump of bushes a hundred yards from the east trail he saw the other horseman trotting toward him. With a call to Pinto, Sorrel leaped into the stream, reaching out for the sand-bar. Pinto followed close behind him, and White and some of the younger horses plunged into the water a few feet away. The rest of the herd turned and ran westward along the shore. As Sorrel turned

about to make sure that Pinto was with him, he saw the horseman drive his pony into the stream, apparently intending to head him off. The saddle-pony, however, seemed to be afraid of the water and it took considerable urging to make it go. Before it reached the middle of the stream, Sorrel was on the sand-bar shaking the water from his body. Swiftly Sorrel loped forward on the sand-bar, and before the horseman was there to stop them, Pinto and he were at the east fence.

Sorrel took a hasty, nervous look at the main current of the river, then in hopes that he might not have to dare it, he turned to see where the man was. He was exceedingly surprised and very much relieved to see him back on the shore, chasing White and the other young horses who had ventured into the stream, along the river bed toward the west.

Sorrel stood with head erect, proud of himself and happy in his confidence in his ability to evade his arch-enemy, while Pinto, panting for breath, stood, head lowered, beside him, trusting entirely to his vigilance. Sorrel watched the man till he was lost in the tortuous shadows of the canyon, then he led Pinto back to the shore, where they remained close to the river side, nipping at the least repugnant leaves of the bushes, watching constantly, with a nervous alertness, for the slightest sound or motion in space. But the river roared louder than they thought, being used to it. With all their nervous alertness, two riders appeared a few hours later, one on the very river shore at the clump of bushes west of them, the other on the east trail coming down the canyon slope.

There was nothing for Sorrel and Pinto to do but go splashing into the stream again. Pinto needed

no urging this time. Close at his heels, she moved as with his brain. On the sand-bar Sorrel stopped for a mere moment, amazed by what he saw. The man on horseback west of them was already on the sand-bar coming in their direction, the one in the east was just climbing up to the sand-bar.

With a wild bewildered whinny to Pinto, Sorrel leaped into the main current of the river, heading north, straight ahead of him, for the opposite shore. He felt himself lifted from his feet by the force of the stream. This wasn't the insignificant little channel between the range and the sand-bar; this was a great river, fed by a hundred tributaries, swollen by a winter of deep snows, driving ruthlessly to the sea, leaping angrily over boulders and tearing tons of sand and pebbles out of the bosom of the earth. The current caught him and lifted him, carrying him westward despite his violent struggle to go north.

The water splashing against his body, lashing noisily at his head, got into his nostrils and went down his throat. Sorrel gasped for breath, snorting to blow the water out, beating violently with his feet. Precarious as his position appeared to him, he was very much concerned about whether Pinto was or was not with him. The river was too noisy to call, too noisy for him to hear, should Pinto be calling. As he made an attempt to turn and see where she was, the river almost swept over him. It forced him completely around, taking him half the distance he had made, back westward and toward the sand-bar; but what he saw made his loss in distance worth while.

He saw Pinto forging ahead beyond the worst of

the current, and he saw the one man who had ventured after him into the main part of the river, climbing back up on to the sand-bar. With lighter heart and greater courage Sorrel beat his way after Pinto. Frightened by loss of sight of him, Pinto had turned. Sorrel would have preferred to go back to the sand-bar, but he had the feeling that the men were there, and would remain there waiting for them. So he struck out desperately toward Pinto



The current swept her with some force against him.

to prevent her turning back. When he came quite close to her, he heard her gasping for breath and blowing great blasts of air through her nostrils. The current swept her with some force against him, but that helped her turn back straight north; and within a few minutes their feet struck pebbled ground.

Both of them were too tired to more than splash along a step at a time; but they had crossed the great Clearwater River, and something of the



admirable thing they had done came to them with the sense of triumph they experienced, when turning at last, they saw the two defeated horsemen slowly going up the east trail of the range. Sorrel drove great blasts of air through his nostrils as he stood watching them. He had not only beaten this thin, tall lord of creation ; but in the roaring river he had found the power with which to maintain his triumph over him.

Before and about them the whitened sandy waters beat and roared and lapped against the rocks and the boulders, but a new voice and a new promise pervaded its clamour. He was no longer afraid of it. Other horses had been afraid to swim the river, but Pinto and he could do it again and again. Always, come what may, they must cling to that river ; once on its magic shores, the way to freedom would remain open to them.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ETERNAL TRAGEDY OF AGE

**T**HE country along the north shore of the Clearwater was somewhat less rugged than that of the south shore, and the slope of the canyon more gradual. There were no signs of human habitations directly opposite the range, and as there were no horsemen in sight, either, Sorrel and Pinto strolled along the rocky shore, exploring the new land with interest, keeping themselves constantly alert. A quarter of a mile east of a point opposite the east fence of the range, they came upon an unusually fine stretch of glade, covered with untouched bunch grass, to the very lip of the canyon wall. Here they settled down, keeping close to the river and the protecting clumps of trees and bushes at the edge of the glade.

The rancher did not show himself that day nor the next, and Sorrel and Pinto waxed fat on the abundant grass. A few days later, however, Sorrel was surprised by sight of three horsemen on the south shore of the river, east of the range fence, picking their way over the clutter of rocks, obviously searching the landscape. Though there were three of them, with elaborate plans for his capture, Sorrel had fortunately discovered them before they had seen him.

With the instinct of wild life, Sorrel and Pinto

glided into the nearest shadow between the trees, and winding in and out among the trees and bushes Sorrel led the way eastward, coming to sections of the river shore where the clutter of rocks was so hard to traverse, that their getting over at all was little short of being miraculous. But the will and the determination to remain free was in them, and doggedly they made their way, stopping constantly to look back and across, catching a drink or a mouthful of grass as they moved along.

During the day they came upon people from time to time in the distance; but not one of these showed the slightest interest in them. Sorrel avoided and evaded them, however, sometimes climbing half-way up the slope of the canyon to keep out of their reach.

Along about the middle of the day, they lost all trace of the horsemen on the opposite shore of the river; and feeling more easy, stopped from time to time to graze, continuing slowly eastward, until evening, when they came to a fir grove, where the ground between the trees was covered with a delicious wide-bladed grass. The grass was so good, the crepuscular silence so reassuring, they gave themselves wholly to their evening meal. Here in the soft murmur of the river, gently licking the rocks in its way, they spent the night.

Most of the next day they remained there, but neither Sorrel nor Pinto was quite at home in this strange country, even though they felt secure there. It seemed a long time since they had lived their lives on the rangeland of their birth, without the tormenting need of constant vigilance; and they hungered for the hills and the hollows, the narrow

channel and the delightful sand-bar, which they knew so much better.

Toward evening they started back westward, and they travelled all night long. Late in the sunny morning they came to a point opposite the range shore, and there they rested for hours, studying their view of the rangeland, persistently, as they rested or nibbled at grass. The rangeland appeared completely deserted, and so late in the afternoon they crossed the river and re-entered the sacred confines of home.

Very timid, however, they moved along the shore to the west end of the range front and kept under cover of the trees for the rest of the evening. At night they ventured up the incline to the range above, but they were startled by the calling of the buckskin plug, who, alone on the range, having learned of their presence, went limping toward the west fence. His coming and his calling worried Sorrel; and without responding to him, he led Pinto back down into the canyon, where all night long they heard Buckskin calling, out of the frenzy of his loneliness.

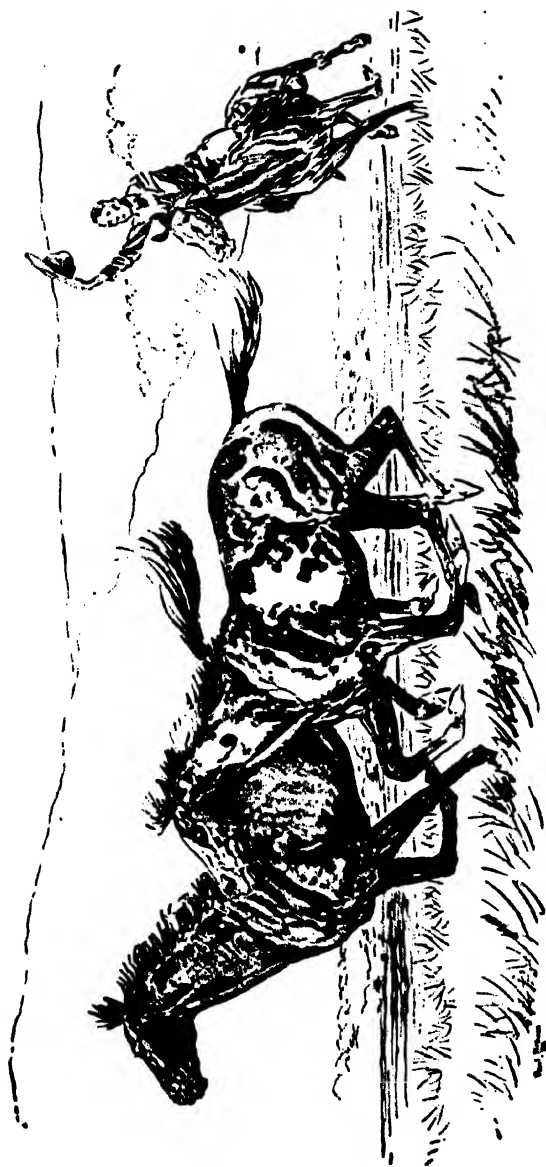
Sorrel had the instinctive feeling that the noisy calling of the old buckskin plug would betray their presence; and he kept Pinto and himself in hiding most of the morning, while Buckskin loaded the air with his frantic appeals to them. And sure enough, before the sun had fully risen, they were surprised by the familiar and alarming rhythm of hoof-beats. As they shot to the river from behind a clump of bushes, they saw what appeared to their frightened eyes a whole cavalry of horsemen turning over the lip of the canyon.

To the complete consternation of the old buckskin plug, who was now within a hundred feet of them, they plunged into the stream, made the sandbar in a few seconds, and tore fearlessly into the main stream. Sorrel's notion of what he ought to do was now so clear to him that even the shouting of the men as they took to the water after them did not swerve him from his direction. Slowly and desperately they fought the violent current, but the moment they made the shallower ground they leaped forward, beating at the water with their legs as they ran.

Loping across the dangerously stony north shore, they saw one of the horsemen eagerly reaching out to a point ahead of them. Sorrel stopped a moment, terrified. Pinto, as frightened as he, collided with him. Sorrel was afraid of the man, but he realized that there was no time to lose. Eastward, he knew his way. Taking his life into his hoofs, he dared attempt to get by the man, whose saddle-pony was already splashing through the shallower part of the river. The man yelled frightfully at them, and waved his hat in the air, but Sorrel raced by him, Pinto in fear on the other side of Sorrel, before he was able to head them off.

The two colts leaped over the stones and the wind-falls in their way, the entire group of horsemen now shouting behind them. So long as the way was passable, Sorrel trusted to his ability to run faster than they could, but when he came to an especially badly cluttered strip of shore he was afraid to continue. Turning abruptly, he broke right back into the river.

Sorrel did not stop to think that, free from saddle



The man yelled frightfully at them, and waved his hat in the air.



and the weight of a man, he could naturally swim twice as fast. He reached the south shore twenty minutes ahead of any of his pursuers, and while he was well-nigh worn-out, and Pinto close behind him struggled for breath, he was now so sure of himself that he enjoyed the struggle. Before the men had reached the shore, Pinto and he had put a mile of space between them. But these men had already spent enough time to make them anxious; and they were as persistent as he was. The clatter of hoofs on the stony shore appeared to be coming nearer and nearer.

Suddenly Sorrel stopped. In the near distance ahead of him he saw through a break in the canyon wall the buildings of a ranch. Just what might happen to him if he tried to pass that point in the shore he did not stop to figure out. To him it meant the possibility of a trap. Hesitating nervously for just a moment, he called to Pinto and once more they dared the great river. The current seemed especially strong here, and already tuckered out, Sorrel swam with what force he had left and a sense of abandon to whatever fate might have in store for him. When they finally regained the north shore, once more, there was no sign of their would-be captors.

For weeks after that Sorrel and Pinto were let alone. The ranchers and the farmers of the district, too busy at this season to go down to play at their rugged river, the sight of a human being became a rarity. A great and glorious summer of delightfully sunny days settled down upon the canyon, bringing back to Sorrel and Pinto the old hunger for their beloved rangeland. Night after night, under the



starry loveliness, they crept back nearer to the range.

One day in July they crossed the river, which had now sunk so shallow that they had but a few feet of swimming to do, where the river was deepest, and once more re-entered the range. It was a very hot day and the trees appeared seared by the heat. The grasses up the slope were long and yellow. The stones were bleached, the shadows tinged by a fiery hue. A silence-like mist hung over the river, and the trees that serrated the edge of the canyon stood straight upright, with a dead motionlessness about them.

Coming out of the river, Sorrel and Pinto were wet and cool, but as they walked along, westward, afraid to go right up to the range above, the wetness evaporated from them, and they sought the cooler shadows. They came to the overhanging boulder, and having travelled long, glad to rest, Sorrel started eagerly up to the ledge under it. On a level with the ledge they stopped abruptly. There, dozing, lay the old buckskin plug.

Buckskin was startled by their appearance, and he whinnied placatingly, starting laboriously to his old legs, and groaning rheumatically as he did so. Sorrel whinnied reassuringly; and poor old Buckskin, shaking the gripping doze from him, was beside himself with gladness to have someone else in his world with him. He moved off obsequiously to give them room in the shadow and whinnied softly, limping most painfully as he moved, his old tail swishing to drive off the pestiferous flies, swishing, however, more as a mere gesture of protest than as an efficient means of ridding himself of the flies.

Sorrel sniffed noses with him, and watched the old fellow as he turned to sniff noses with Pinto. When all of them lay down again in the shadow, Buckskin continued his emotional whinnying, too filled up with feeling to be able to keep still. But



Sorrel sniffed noses with him and watched the old fellow as he turned to sniff noses with Pinto.

that was all he was filled up with, his sides were fallen in and his ribs protruded under his skin.

Wherever Sorrel and Pinto went during the next few days the old buckskin lumbered along, calling softly and meaninglessly, exerting himself damagingly by his repeated climbings up and down the canyon wall after them. Sorrel and Pinto lived their lives as they saw fit, uninfluenced by the old fellow's struggles to keep up with them; and then,

after the first excitement of having someone with him had subsided a bit, the old fellow ceased dogging their every step, content to be in sight of them, or even just to know that they were somewhere on the range.

One night, later in the week, Sorrel came suddenly to the feeling that he hadn't seen the old fellow for some time. Wherever he had kept himself in the day-time, he had invariably clung to them at night. The old fellow's absence worried Sorrel only in a vague, uncertain way. As he grazed, Sorrel would lift his muzzle, filled with grass, and chewing, he would gaze away, preoccupied, into space.

This subtle feeling took a firmer and firmer hold upon Sorrel. He would constantly be going up to the hill-tops and there stand and look in every direction; and in his grazing he acquired the tendency to wander. That afternoon he experienced a desire to visit the pointed hill. He led Pinto down the canyon wall, walked along the river leisurely, looking everywhere, went up the steep incline on the trail along the west fence, crossed the stony area and went down into the hollow; and there he turned with a sudden feeling of knowledge, a sort of blind understanding.

He went straight eastward along the hollow toward the base of the pointed hill, and coming around a clump of wild-rose bushes he stopped. There in the hollow before him, on a straight line with Black's bones, half-way up the slope, lay the prostrate form of Buckskin, as if he had fallen while on a pilgrimage to the remains of the black colt. And Sorrel knew that Buckskin would never be moving over the range again.

Pinto clung close to Sorrel's side, and the two of them advanced towards the uncanny heap on the floor of the hollow, a nervous step at a time. A few feet from Buckskin, Sorrel stopped again and sniffed. Then he looked up to the white bones peering out of the shadow of the tall grasses half-way up the slope. Somehow he could not sever the life-long connection made in his mind between the men, the snake, and this terrible motionlessness. Had the men come in the night? Would they be coming again?

Sorrel turned suddenly and raced up the slope, avoiding the heap of bones, Pinto clinging to his side as if she were afraid to be left alone. On the peak of the hill, Sorrel gazed southward in the direction of the avenue between the two wire fences. He saw nothing to disturb him, yet he could not throw off the uncanny feeling of fear that had come with the idea. Down the west slope of the hill he trotted toward the west trail and back to the river as fast as he could go. But even there, his sense of discomfort clung to him and made him restless. They waded into the stream, climbed up the sand-bar and raced playfully up and down the sand, their playfulness heavy with something sinister and unpleasant which it failed to remove.

That night the scavenger coyotes loaded the air of the range with their hilarious yapping, and the next day the rancher appeared. Sorrel and Pinto fled at once to the river, and crossed to the north shore, but while the water was now so shallow they were able to wade completely across, the rancher did not follow them. Nevertheless, the mystery enshrouding the old buckskin and the reappearance

of the rancher sent Sorrel eastward for many days.

Where the Clearwater forks, the North Fork breaking into the main body of the river, they remained for many days ; then they began again to take sneaking trips back into the rangeland. They would cross the river in the mists of early night, and would remain down in the canyon until full darkness. Secure in the darkness of the night, they would venture up to the range above, never going far enough from the lip of the canyon even to take a look at the old buckskin plug, whom they had left in the hollow, below the pointed hill. But they would lope down the canyon slope, slipping, sliding and splashing across the river at the slightest sign of danger.

The rainy season of autumn set in and the days hung gloomy and dull over the canyon. The river had begun to swell and to roar, and venturing across it became too serious an undertaking for anything but a last resort ; and so they remained in the range.

## CHAPTER VI

### WINTER

**T**HE yapping of coyotes during the greater part of one night had apprised the young rancher of the fact that the old buckskin plug had finally died. The following morning he had ridden into the range to investigate the matter, and he had caught a glimpse of both Sorrel and Pinto not far from the pointed hill. He had been very much disappointed in the frustration of his plan to begin the training of the sorrel colt, and he had been very much worried about their being outside of the range fence; but he had felt that he could not afford the time to go chasing them up the river, "the Lord knows how far." The fact that they were back, safe in the range, was a great relief to him. He reasoned that the following spring Sorrel would be no more than two years and nine months old, and he held that before three years of age a horse could be broken without any danger to health or usefulness.

For a while, after their return to the rangeland, Sorrel and Pinto were wary and nervous, but the rangeland hills rolling away out of sight remained motionless and lifeless, and they soon regained the old faith that the rangeland world was a place made and meant for them.

The lovely days of Indian Summer, that fall,

were the happiest they had ever known. The sunny hours of daytime followed in regular succession by the starry, keen, refreshing hours of the nights, they grazed and gambolled and splashed about the stream, so continuously unmolested that they began to think that life would remain forever free and secure and delightful.

Then the work-horses of the ranch returned. As in the fall before, these work-worn creatures were ill-humoured and stolid. Their attitude towards Sorrel and Pinto was one of absolute indifference. Their sole concern was grass and water, and they quarrelled over these things where quarrelling was unnecessary. Yet Sorrel found himself strangely interested in them, especially interested in some of them. There was White, ugly, quite mean at times, who kept him thinking of wild coltish escapades, reckless leaping over space. There was the big red mare, about whom hung so many dull, grey associations, the "smell of" whose fur, despite its barniness, made him think of the long dark nights in his colthood—a great, warm, big body, protecting him against a black, cold, howlingly hostile world. There was the white mare who murmured good-naturedly, and the bay mare who walked off wearily when he went up to sniff noses with them, who kept him standing and looking meditatively after them.

The winter set in full force. The early flurries of snow were followed by a real snowfall, and thereafter they were obliged to dig for their grass. So too the river froze solid, and Sorrel pounded the ice in the stream, every morning, to make a hole to drink from. Each of the work-horses would stand

there patiently, waiting for his turn to drink at the hole, rather than try to make a hole for himself. Again they took to the ledge under the overhanging boulder, and again they commenced the dismal standing and dozing through the long interminable hours of the cold winter night.

The days continued bleak and dreary, the winds howled through the deserted canyon, where the trees swayed whiningly, resisting the showers of powdered snow. When an hour of sunshine came along, they would race over the hills, plunging into the deep drifts like happy children. Their human enemies seemed to have vanished from their world. Cold as the nights were, deep as the snow was, Sorrel and Pinto remained fat and sleek, their long hair keeping them warm. Life to them was free and satisfactory.



## CHAPTER VII

### HORSE-SENSE AND STRATAGEM

**S**PRING came again and man returned to his persistent intrusion. The sorrel stallion, however, was more confident in his ability to elude them than ever. Fleeter of foot, he took pride in his ability to race swiftly across the thawing earth, the clods darting so forcefully from his hoofs that no horse ventured behind him. And he actually vaunted before the herd his power to grapple with the roaring waters of the swollen river, plunging into the stream, leaping up on to the sand-bar, diving into the swifter current of the main body of the river, turning where it lifted him like a cork, and beating his way back to the sand-bar, as the herd looked on, even Pinto refusing to try it with him.

They happened to be within a short distance of the trail that ran along the east fence, up on the range, when the rancher and his hired man appeared for the first time that spring. At once Sorrel sprang for the trail and the herd poured down the canyon wall like a vaporizing waterfall. By the river shore, they drank and churned about in the shallow part of the stream, some running off and coming back, all watching the canyon lip nervously. Then as the two riders appeared on the trail coming down the slope, Sorrel struck out across the stream for the

sand-bar ; but when he got to the sand-bar he was alarmed to find that Pinto was running along the shore, westward, behind the rest of the herd.

Instead of going back to the shore, he raced after her along the sand-bar, calling to her as he went. She turned her head to him when he overtook her, but she continued to follow the herd. Crossing the stream again, Sorrel ran in front of her and turned her back. When she faithfully waded into the stream, he kept right close to her and behind her till he had her on the sand-bar, then drove her eastward to the range fence. By that time the two riders had reached the river bed. Sorrel did not wait to see what they would do, nor did he have to drive Pinto into the main current. She was as excited about the nearness of the men as he was, and as anxious to get out of their reach. She jumped into the main body of the river quite willingly, but when she reached the strongest part of the current she was ready to give up and go back. Sorrel, keeping close to her, saw her turn, and at once beat his way around her, getting between her and the sand-bar.

She apparently knew what he wanted. She turned obediently again, but once more, as soon as she reached the overwhelming current, she tried to turn. As Sorrel was there to urge her, to keep her from going back to the sand-bar, she struck out eastward to avoid the current that was too much for her. She managed to swim past the end of the range-fence wire, so close to it that Sorrel was forced to drop back. Before he could get around it and again around her to drive her northward, she was back on the sand-bar.

Sorrel was frantic. He wanted her to cross the river with him, because he did not feel safe on the south shore, even though 'they were now outside the range fence. Up on the sand-bar beside her, he tried, by every means he could think of, to drive her back into the river, but she refused to go. She was evidently all tuckered out, and she snorted in a peculiar, exhausted manner, her muzzle so low it almost touched the sand, water dripping from it. Do what he could to prevent it, as soon as she had regained her breath, she started across the channel, back to the shore.

Sorrel raised his head high and looked over the east fence, back into the range. He could see no sign of the riders nor of any of the herd; and, being pretty well tired out himself, he just followed Pinto to the shore.

Pinto did not even have the strength to shake the water from her fur. A feeble attempt, and on she went, the water dripping from her to the pebbles and the stones. She made for a clump of bushes and lying down in the shade, she remained there, to Sorrel's dismay, for the rest of the morning.

Toward midday, she got up with much groaning and walked off with him, going slowly and hesitatingly, stopping every now and then, staring with listless eyes, sniffing around as if seeking a place to lie down on. They moved slowly eastward, away from the range; and when, at evening, they came to a small, grassy oblong, reaching up the slope, where Sorrel turned to graze, she found a shady spot beside a tree and lay down.

Ever on the alert for sight or sound of his pursuers, Sorrel went on grazing, going up the slope,

nibbling the grass around tree or bush or boulder, but Pinto did not join him. Every time he turned to look toward her, she was lying, her head lowered, seemingly asleep. Tired of grazing, he went down to the river shore to drink. Along the shore he strolled westward a way, to see whether the men by chance were coming again. There was no sign of the men anywhere, and so he strolled back again.

Reaching a point directly below the tree where he had left Pinto, Sorrel stopped and called to her. She did not reply to him. Her conduct worried him. He trotted up the slope and sniffing noses with her and calling to her, he got her up on her feet. Then he tried to induce her to run with him. He would start away from her with a jump, as if he had been frightened, but he fooled only himself. Beyond lowering her head, and listlessly cropping some grass, she did not respond to him at all.

Finally Sorrel started away up the river shore, in earnest. He had the feeling that if he went far enough, she would follow him. It was so lovely along the river's edge, the water murmuring and dripping, the sky radiantly silver, the trees peacefully clear against the skylight, birds swooping joyfully through the air, he took keenest delight in strolling leisurely, sniffing at everything, and watching the play of water over the rocks in its way.

He had moved along, forgetfully, for more than a mile, and it had taken him more time than he had realized. He came to a turn in the canyon walls, and was about to start back toward Pinto, when in the deepening darkness in space ahead, he saw a light. He stopped dead still. For nearly half an hour he stood like a stone statue, gazing at the

strange red star that gleamed in the shadow of the canyon wall. What he wanted to know was whether it was a living thing, whether it moved. But it didn't move. Relieved a bit, he called softly to Pinto, turning his head back as he did so, then turning front again to watch that light. It fascinated him. His curiosity was aroused to the last degree. Still futilely calling to Pinto, he went on slowly eastward, away from her, anxious to get closer to the light.

He would go on a few paces, then stop and stare. Finally he lost it. As it disappeared, he became more concerned about it than ever. It was hiding from him. He must see what it is. He ventured farther and farther, the skin quivering on his flanks. Then coming around a huge granite boulder, he saw it again. It was brighter by far than it had been when he had first seen it, and it was much higher up on the canyon wall. Sure that it was yet very far away, he went on still farther, until he discovered that it was coming from another canyon wall, a canyon that broke into the canyon of the Clearwater, at the bottom of which ran a small tributary stream. It was a light coming from the ranch building he had seen on one of his flights from man, before.

Feeling very much easier about the light, he began to worry about Pinto. She was not with him at all. He began to call to her as he trotted backward. Getting no response from her, he began to lope. He almost broke his neck, tripping on a stone, but he rose to his feet quickly and disregarding the bruises he had gotten, he went on loping. It seemed to him that he had covered many times the space he

thought he had travelled, and yet he did not come to the spot where he had left Pinto.

As he ran, he called frantically, but there came no answer, not a sound from her. He lost his notion of where he was. He stopped several times and sniffed, but nothing appeared familiar. He became bewildered. Running up the slope, he ran down again and loped till, in amazement, he ran into the east fence of the range. The barbed wires pricked him painfully, but he was so glad to know again where he was that he did not mind that. Turning about, he picked his way carefully, till he found the grassy spot where he had left Pinto. He struggled breathlessly up the incline to the tree near which she had been lying during the afternoon, but she was not there. Like a dog he sniffed at the ground, picking up her scent, and trying to follow it, ran around the open space, confusedly. In despair he stopped and, raising his head high, sent out a frantic call, but his call came mockingly back from the opposite wall of the canyon. Pinto did not answer.

Down again to the river shore he ran. Turning eastward and racing along, he loped till he came once more to the granite boulder from beside which he had gazed at the light ; but there was no trace of her there, and the light was gone. When he got back to the grassy spot and had made a long and futile attempt to follow her scent without finding her, he was convinced that in his absence she had gone back home to the rangeland.

Back to the river once more he went, his neck and shoulders now wet with perspiration, and reaching the east fence of the range, he drove into the stream, made the sand-bar, plunged into the

cold and swift current, swam around the wires and back to the sand-bar within the range fence. Then he splashed through the stream and back to the main shore ; and without taking time to shake the water from his body, he went, loping wildly, calling as he loped, all the way to the west fence.

Up the canyon wall he went like a hunted coyote, across the stony area, down the hollow, along the west trail to the very south-west corner of the range, where he could hear the ranch dog barking. Somehow he couldn't believe that Pinto had been captured, and away he went eastward across the range, along the east trail back again toward the canyon, down the canyon wall, into the stream, up the sand-bar, right into the devilish current, that lifted him and tossed him, almost beating the breath out of him. Around the wire end, he swam back to the sand-bar outside of the range, and again loped away to the stretch of grass where he had last seen her.

There he sniffed at the spot where she had lain, starting off in a thousand directions, losing the scent and racing back to the tree to start over again, till he became too weary to remain on his feet, and finally lay down. His ears pricked, he listened to the sounds of the night, hoping to catch something that would assure him of her presence, but all he heard was the muffled roar of the river, the splashing lapping of the water on the rocks, the sighing of the breeze in the trees, and the distant weird calling of birds.

He couldn't lie still very long, however. Up he was again, sniffing, running, calling, turning backward and forward, covering all trace of her scent



The Horse

From there he saw her ; and when he did see her, he stopped, completely overcome with amazement.





by his own frenzied footsteps. Dawn came. The silvery advance light of day diluted the shadows of the tormentingly long night. Tree trunks came out of the darkness, grey rocks began smiling toward the sky, and heavy fog mists went sailing down the mouth of the canyon.

Sorrel took a long drink of water at the river shore, then he recommenced his search for Pinto. All along the stream he walked, east and back again west, his head high, his eyes studying the shadows along the canyon wall. The sun had pierced the fog mists and had almost completely eaten them away, however, before Sorrel was rewarded by sight of two familiar pointed ears, back and above a wide clump of bushes, a hundred feet above the tree where Pinto had rested the afternoon before. Half frantic, half hilarious with the joy of finding her, Sorrel whinnied till the very atmosphere above the canyon trembled. But as if in this calling she was apprised of the fact that he had spied her, the two ears quickly dropped out of sight.

By the time he had raced up the incline to where he had seen her, he could not find her anywhere. Her behaviour was bewildering. It seemed as if the entire order of life, as he had accepted it, taken it for granted, had suddenly reversed itself. But having been assured of her whereabouts, he was not going to give up his search. Several times, he went all the way up and down again, then one time he climbed to the top of the canyon wall.

From there, he saw her ; and when he did see her, he stopped, completely overcome with amazement. She was standing close to the bushes, and a tiny, scrawny brown colt was helping himself to her

milk. He rushed right down to her, foolishly, but she faced him with ears laid back and teeth bared threateningly. He had been so eager to get to her that he slipped down the slope to within a few yards from her, but her greeting sobered him. He clambered away from her to the side, then slipping down to the ledge on which she was standing, he started very slowly and cautiously toward her. Her ill-humour grew only more intense with his persistency. He stopped a few feet away and looking at her with a hurt expression on his face, he murmured hopelessly.

A hundred times he started toward her in the most placating manner he could assume, but she was obdurate, and the nearer he came, the more violent she appeared. Finally, with a turn of his head, perplexed and hurt, he started down toward the river, stopping again and again, turning his head up toward her in the hope that she might have changed her mind, but she only laid back her ears and bared her teeth.

All morning Sorrel remained on the slope or at the river shore directly below her. Toward midday, he looked up to see her coming down the slope, laboriously. He was afraid to go to her, too eagerly, so he stood where he was, trembling with emotion, as she came wearily towards him. She came right to him, and when he sniffed noses with her, she turned weakly and began scratching his crest with her teeth, in the old affectionate way. Sorrel was beside himself for joy. He pranced about her, tried to get her to run and play ; but she walked slowly to the river and took a long drink, then she turned and started up the incline again. She let him follow her

all the way up to the ledge, but there she turned on him again and drove him off.

He remained, after that, at the lower end of the grassy oblong, looking up to her every other minute, guarding both directions along the river against any chance reappearance of the rancher, guarding her and her colt with a concern that was deeper and more intense than any he had ever had before.

Pinto came down several times during the day, but not until evening did she appear to be at all like her old self. After drinking deeply at the river, she went grazing with him, and all night long they grazed on the grass oblong below the ledge where her colt was sleeping, grazing side by side, often so close together that their muzzles touched. In the early morning of the following day, she went back to her colt, and Sorrel lay down to rest in the shade of the tree where she had lain, the evening he had missed her.

He had been dozing but a short time, when he was awakened by a call from Pinto which sent him with a bound to his feet. Looking up toward her nest, he saw her standing to the side of the bushes looking from him up the slope to the lip of the canyon, where he now saw two men on horseback riding along the edge of the canyon toward a spot directly over Pinto.

His big heart throbbing violently, his eyes glaring fear and hatred, Sorrel leaped upward towards her. She did not bare her teeth when he came this time, but she got between him and the colt. Sorrel stationed himself in front of her on the ledge, a picture of defiance, which defiance was belied by the fear and nervousness evident in his every move.

The men, now directly above them, dismounted.

Soon, Sorrel saw one of the men start coming down toward the ledge, leading his horse by the reins. Sorrel stamped his foot and tossed his head, but he



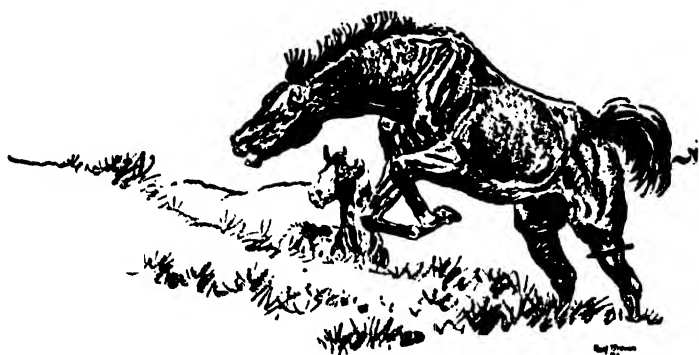
leaped off from the ledge as soon as the man came too near and Pinto, calling fearfully, leaped away with him. Both of them went wild as they saw the second man, who had come down without his horse, approach the scrawny colt. The colt stood, looking toward his mother, shaking on his legs.

Pinto's frenzy went to the heart of Sorrel. His eyes blazing fire, he tore up the incline toward the man; and the man was obviously afraid of him. The man stepped away from the colt, toward the other man with the horse, then coming back toward Sorrel, he swung a long whip, the end of which twanged threateningly through the air. Stooping at the same time, he picked up a rock and hurled it at Sorrel, striking him on the shoulder.

Sorrel was so frightened that he ran half-way down the slope, but there he stopped, turned and started back up again. Pinto was standing a few yards from her colt, holding herself in readiness to

run, and calling to it plaintively. As they looked on, one of the men climbed up the slope a way and around again, down to the other side of the colt, and between the two of them, they caught him. The little fellow called frantically to his mother, and Pinto ran up and down the slope around them, shattering the air with her protests.

The men fussed over the colt for some time, and then Sorrel saw them lift him and put him on the saddle-pony's back. While one man led the saddle-pony, the other walked beside it, holding on to the colt. In that way they descended the slope to the



His eyes blazing fire, he tore up the incline toward the man.

river shore, and slowly made their way along the river to the east fence of the range, Pinto whinnying desperately a few yards behind them, Sorrel a short distance behind Pinto.

At the fence the men stopped. Sorrel watched them from the distance but he didn't see very much. Pretty soon, he saw them lead their saddle-pony right through the fence. Then, when they were some few yards beyond the fence in the range, he saw Pinto go through the break in the wires as they had done. He tried in every way he could to get

Pinto to return to him, but Pinto did not even hear him. Whinnying with tragic plaintiveness, she trotted after the saddle-pony,\*keeping out of reach, but following eagerly, and calling first from one side and then from the other, running in a confused zigzag.

The men, with the saddle-pony and Pinto's colt, moved on ruthlessly, completely disregarding Pinto. Thus they hit the east trail and went slowly up the incline. At the break in the fence, Sorrel stood for some time, calling to Pinto louder and louder, but finding that she would not come back, and dreading to lose her, he broke nervously through the fence and trotted up the east slope till he overtook her.

Even on the trail he tried to induce her to run back down to the river with him. He ran in front of her, but she only bared her teeth with angry impatience, straining after her colt, and recklessly going almost right up to the saddle-pony.

When the procession reached the range above, one of the men left the other with the saddle-pony and the colt, and walked away, eastward, to the range fence. Both Pinto and Sorrel stopped to watch him, fearing that he might be coming to attack them; but when they saw him step over the fence and go on eastward beyond the range, into the strip of woodlands, they felt easier. By this time the man leading the saddle-pony with the colt on its back was going down into a hollow, out of sight. Pinto sprang away after him, and all poor Sorrel could do was to go loping, perplexed, after her.

In that manner they moved diagonally across the range. As they neared the south-west corner of it, Sorrel began *growing* very uneasy. He ran to



He ran to Pinto, brushed against her and ran in front of her.





Pinto, brushed against her and ran in front of her, calling to her to go back with him, but Pinto became more and more annoyed with him, and one time she actually bit him.

Sorrel stopped on the trail, surprised. A great change had come over her. He could not understand it, and yet he did connect this change in her behaviour with the coming of the colt. Strange as the whole thing appeared to him, he could not endure the thought of being without her, of going back alone ; and so, puzzled, considerably doubtful of the outcome of this forced and uncanny journey, he followed her to the open gateway, into the avenue between the two wire fences.

At the gateway, Sorrel stopped again, once more calling on Pinto not to go. He was horrified by her venturing into the avenue. He ran after her and got in front of her, but she bared her teeth and laid back her ears. Then he forced her around and drove her back towards the range, but she broke away from him again and ran after her colt.

Sorrel remained at the avenue gateway, watching her, but as soon as she had gone down beyond the knob out of sight, he loped after her. On the knob, however, he slowed down, and with legs nervous with fear, he moved about the narrow space, calling to Pinto who, in full view of the ranchyard, stood within a few feet of the corral, crying after her baby. And then, just as he was trying to make up his mind what he ought to do, the very air becoming unendurable there, loaded as it was with ranch-yard odours, he heard the alarming, loping patter of a horse in the distance behind him. Turning swiftly around, he saw the other horseman come galloping

across the range, heading for the gateway to the avenue between the two wire fences.

With all his strength, he made a desperate attempt to get out of the avenue before the man could stop him, but a hundred feet from the gateway, he saw the man and horse break right into it. Sorrel came to so abrupt a stop that he almost went over forward, just as the man leaped from the saddle to shut the gate.

Frustrated, Sorrel tossed his head defiantly and reared high on his hind legs. Swerving in mid-air, he loped back to Pinto. Pinto was still so worried over her colt, that she did not appear to care that the second horseman was coming up the avenue. To get away from the man, Sorrel dashed into the corral, but Pinto did not follow him until the man actually drove her in. When the corral gate was shut upon both of them, she ran up to the corral wall that faced the ranch yard, and sticking her head over the topmost beam, she called to her colt, until they carried it off to the barn and out of sight.

Sorrel loped from wall to wall and around the corral. He was trapped again as he had been trapped there before; but he had gotten away the first time. There *was* a way out. He must find it. And his planless search for the magic way raised again the stifling dust clouds from his frenzied hoofs.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ABYSMAL DEEPS

**T**HE sorrel stallion did not concern himself with such abstractions as TRUTH or JUSTICE. Man alone deals in these. Man alone ignores them most flagrantly in his relations to anything outside of himself, or what is worse, kneads and twists and distorts them to justify his selfish disregard of them. The power to put one's self into the place of another, honestly and without any selfish reservations, is the power that would make man superior to all other living things, but that capacity is as yet in the hands of very few men.

Sorrel's attitude toward life consisted entirely of an eagerness to answer the urges that he found arising within him. He wanted grass, and he wanted water, and he wanted the companionship of his own kind. He had no wants that would do evil to the interests of the other creatures who inhabited the world with him.

The rancher wanted Sorrel to toil for him, and his much-exaggerated sense of justice left him blind to the fact that this want conflicted violently with every desire of his victim. With preposterous stupidity, unwilling to modify his own wants, he expected Sorrel to submit to his wishes, *without protest*; and the rancher was, as men go, a very good man.

For several hours, Sorrel and Pinto were allowed to express their displeasure in their own way, Pinto standing by the wall, gazing hungrily at the black barn doorway, Sorrel circulating aimlessly around the dusty corral space. When Pinto wearied calling to her baby and Sorrel grew tired racing around the corral, they stood close together, staring with blazing eyes at the thousand and one oddities and mysteries that were displayed, as on a stage, between the huge barn and the rear house-door.

A good many horses appeared in the yard, from time to time, coming out of the barn-door and going off along the roadways, out of sight. Some of these, Sorrel recognized and called to. Some of them answered him, while others seemed too weary to answer. Some of them were so completely covered with harness that it was hard to recognize them, the blinders on their eyes giving their partly lowered heads an expression of unvoiced misery and dissatisfaction.

There were strange sights and strange smells. Chickens kept the yard alive with colour and sound and motion. Cattle came lowing from the cow pasture, toward evening, pigs grunted and squealed in the pig-sty, and the dog barked incessantly, keeping Sorrel's nerves raw and afire.

Early in the evening, just as Sorrel had begun to think that he might as well rest in the farthest corner of the corral, that he was to be let alone for a while anyway, a man came into the corral, carrying a long whip, which he snapped in the air. A second man arrived a few minutes later and stationed himself near the gate of the corral, opening it partly. The man with the whip came toward them. Sorrel

tossed his head in anger and defiance, and began running around the corral. The man with the whip walked after them, keeping them running. As he came around where the gateway was, Sorrel noticed that the man held the gate open. So intense was his desire to get away, so desperate his hope to escape, that even his fear of the man could not keep him from making an attempt to get out; but the man apparently anticipated him. The whip snapped in the air and the end of it caught him on the nose, giving him a stinging blow that made his eyes water. Blind with pain and fury, he leaped toward the opposite wall, but there he turned to see whether the man was coming after him; and to his horror, he saw them pulling Pinto by a long rope attached to her head, one man pulling, the other with the whip driving her from behind.

Hatred and rebellion flared up like a fire in his confused mind. Pain or no pain, he sprang for the protesting Pinto, and rushed at the man with bared teeth. The whip twanged again in the air and caught him on the neck, but twitching with pain, stepping back a single pace, he reared on his hind legs and threatened the man with his front hoofs. The man was terrified. Leaping backward and to the side to get out of the way, he turned and lashed the whip with hateful fury. The welts rose on Sorrel's neck, and the smarting water blinded his eyes. To escape the storm of burning lashes long enough to regain his breath, he fled to the opposite wall. When he turned again, Pinto was gone, the men were gone and the gate was closed.

Frothing with anger, he hurled himself at the gate, but it did not even creak; and then he

discovered Pinto in the yard. The man holding the rope was pulling at her. She resisted, pulling back. The man behind struck her with the whip and she sprang forward toward the man with the rope. He ran on and in that way they got her into the barn. And long after that frightful day, Sorrel remembered seeing her rump, as it vanished in the blackness of the barn doorway.

Then they came back to him. Sorrel ceased his frantic calling to Pinto, and faced them, majestic in his anger. One man opened the gateway, it seemed to him. As he stood there holding it, the second man, the man with the whip, walked off sideways, along the wall of the corral. Sorrel turned to watch him, glaring with one eye at the gateway. He felt that he might crash the gate and go tearing after Pinto. The man with the whip, however, turned upon him. Sorrel received a stinging blow on the head that almost staggered him.

There was no use fighting the man with the whip, Sorrel realized that now. His hope lay in getting out of that gateway. Turning now with more anxiety than defiance, he dared attempt the gateway; but somehow, he struck the wrong side of it. The thing folded upon him, and before he had time to back out, he was squeezed helpless, between two log walls.

He tried his tremendous strength in a passion of resistance, and managed to give the men a great deal of trouble, but they worked fast and furiously. The gate folded upon him and against the wall of the corral was tied firmly behind him. He did not have room enough to make use of a fraction of his strength. His resistance showed itself in futile

waves of energy moving along his muscular body, but they seemed to be putting walls under and over him, and with all his waste of energy, he could not even lift a foot to kick with.

The tall rancher came towards his head. He talked in low soft tones. There was a kindliness in his voice that slightly mitigated Sorrel's fear and hatred, and that made dim connections in his mind with that strange experience back in his half-remembered colthood, along the river shore. Just the same, when the rancher ran his hand up his forehead and between his ears, he bared his teeth and tried to pull his head away.

The halter was forced upon his head and the halter shank tied to a beam. Groaning and snorting with maddening bitterness against the helplessness they had forced upon him, he was obliged to endure their repulsive intimacy, their touching him and feeling him, and talking over him. All his life he had lived free in the open without a single creature daring to go right near him, and now without fear they were handling him, lifting his hoofs, running their hands over his body; and he could not even turn to see what they were doing.

Then suddenly, out of the darkness of the lowering night, out of the darkest blackness of his fear and hatred, came a wave of excruciating pain. Every muscle taut, he let out a dreadful cry of anguish, which fell away into a snorting blast of air through his nostrils. The pain came again and again in successive waves. His consciousness began flickering like a light blown by the wind. His sides throbbing, he pressed his muzzle between two logs of the corral wall. Perspiration came out all over



his head and neck, and shadows of things in the dusk before him reeled and vibrated. He felt himself falling into deeps of darkness. The very creatures tormenting him seemed to recede. Only their hateful voices sounded with a rhythmic monotony, in the distance of the night that had lowered upon him.

## CHAPTER IX

### CHAMPING THE BIT

**I**F Sorrel had been, like man, a creature that measures time in units of hours, days, or months, he should not have been able to tell how long he had been down in the abysmal deeps of anguish and confusion. He came out of the cyclonic darkness, thirsty and feverish with fear, his outlook upon life subtly changed in the crucible of pain. Every sound of an approaching man, every sight of one walking across the ranch yard, sent him into paroxysms of fear, fear that they were coming to inflict pain on him again.

When they brought him food and water, he did not touch either, but stretched backward as far as his halter rope would allow him, and glared at the intruder with blazing eyes. Even after the man had gone, he wouldn't touch the water he wanted so much, harassed by the feeling that the man was about somewhere, where he couldn't see him, looking at him.

Then slowly his head lowered to the pail of water. He merely wet his muzzle, quickly pulling his head away from the man-smelling thing. But licking the wetness from his lips, his thirst increased, and soon, seeing no one about, he lowered his head and drank. He took merely a sip or two, repeating this a few moments later, finally draining it to the last drop.

But it was several days before he ate any of the hay that lay at his feet, drying in the sun. Then slowly, bit by bit, he began nibbling at the hay, forced to some action by the unendurable monotony of just standing still.

He began to feel, as the man came time after time without hurting him, that he wouldn't inflict pain on him every time he appeared; and when they left him hay or water or oats, without hurting him, he experienced a half-conscious sort of gratefulness.

As he began to eat regularly, his strength came back to him. But with the return of his strength, came time for the breaking of his will. They set a Sunday aside for the purpose; and what appeared to Sorrel like a whole crowd of people, men, women and children, in bright colours and with loud voices, gathered on the ranch yard. When the men came into the corral, Sorrel was certain that they came to hurt him again. Gathering every drop of energy, ready for use, fear and hatred fairly oozing out of his moist, shining eyes, Sorrel prepared to fight.

Man makes *things* fight for him. What he cannot do with his own strength and body, he gets wood and iron and rope to do for him. When Sorrel struck out with a savage kick at the wooden gate of the corral, he left his imprint on the log that he hit; and while it did make the men move back out of the way, for a moment, it did not hurt them and the gate slowly folded upon him again.

Now that they had him so that he could not fight back, he was sure that they meant to torture him again; and he went through needless hours of



While he was blindly resisting without sense or plan, they cunningly laid traps for his defeat.



mental agony, because he could not understand words. Everything they did seemed so much like the things they had done to him that evening, that they had him in a fit of terror, by the time they had succeeding in forcing the bridle upon his head, and the bridle-bit between his teeth.

They released the wooden gate at once, however, and while he pranced about nervously, this gave him the hope that his torture this time would not be as great as it had been. It also gave him the feeling that he could fight and defend himself.

The bridle was tighter and more exasperatingly annoying than the halter had been. The bit on his tongue, grating between his teeth, was hardly endurable. The saddle they had tied to his back with straps that cut into his sides appeared to him like a part of the corral fixed to his body. He didn't know which hateful encumbrance to fight against first. In vain he tried to shake his body so as to throw off the saddle; and when he bit with anger at the iron bit between his teeth, and the pain shot in every direction through his teeth and head, he lifted his head high, in agony. The two men, holding the straps tied to the bridle-rings, pulled hard on them. The iron bit, twisting, struck the roof of his mouth so painfully, that he went wild. He reared on his hind legs and tossed his head and tore out of the opened gateway, dragging the two men half-way across the yard, before they halted him.

The first sensations of being out in the open intensified his madness. He began to fight with complete disregard for the pain that his fighting earned him. But his violence only brought more violence upon him. As the women and children ran from the open

yard to the safety of doorways, the men closed in on him. While he was blindly resisting, without sense or plan, they cunningly laid traps for his defeat. Hanging on as best they could, they dropped loops of rope to the ground in front of him and between his forelegs and his hind legs. While he pranced around wildly, the loops tightened about his fetlocks; and suddenly, just as the most violent revulsion against this torture flared up in him, and he made a supreme effort to get away, these ropes drew his feet in from under him, and he went down with a thud, on his nose.

The fall dizzied him, and for a few minutes he lay prostrate, groaning, and panting for breath; then gathering himself, he leaped to his feet with greater determination to fight than ever. But at his first attempt to spring forward, the ropes drew his feet in again, and again he went down on his nose. The spirit in him, acquired in the long freedom before capture, was not easily broken. Again he was on his feet and again he made an attempt to get away, but with cruel relentlessness, the ropes performed their work a third time. This time, he remained lying on his side so long, the rancher became worried and with the whip forced him to rise.

After he got to his feet once more, he was so afraid of being thrown, that he was willing to do anything rather than incur that torment another time. When the tall young rancher and his hired man started forward ahead of him, pulling on the straps tied to his bridle-rings, he followed with trembling limbs and shameless servility. Forgotten for the moment was freedom, the rangeland, and the beloved river, in his dread of incurring more pain. He followed



Paul Brown

These ropes drew his feet in from under him, and he went down with a thud.





with eager, if hateful, docility, wherever the men led, and the men and women and children laughed and commented noisily upon this victory.

Sorrel was licked, outrageously, resentfully licked, for the time being ; but in the fires of passion that shone in his eyes, as misinterpreted by the men, as he misinterpreted what they said or manifested, there remained the flickering hope that some time, somehow, as he had done before, he would escape their torture and return to his rangeland.

They finally took him back into the corral. Tying him securely, they left the bridle on his head so that he might the sooner become accustomed to it. The quiet hours of evening approached. The visitors left the ranch yard, and the evening stillness brought back to Sorrel sensations of twilight along the the river shore, keen coldness in the air, damp-smelling earth, and vague hallucinations of the lulling gurgle of water lapping the rocks. Every muscle in his body aching, Sorrel stood looking off into the unhelping spaces, calling long and feelingly, listening to the empty echoes of his voice, as they came back to him, first from the barn wall, and later from the distant hills.

The bridle on his head was an insolent annoyance, and the bit in his mouth, the persistent reminder of his helplessness. He reduced his futile activities to the assiduous pushing against the bit with his tongue ; and then in anger and bitter consciousness of frustration, he began the champing of the bit, which was to become the accompaniment of the deadening routine of his work days.

All night long, hour after hour, he stood shifting his weight from one weary foot to another, calling without knowing what he was calling for, champing with mad stupidity at the immovable bit. There was a mite of relief in this champing of the bit.

## CHAPTER X

### MEMORIES

**O**STENSIBLY, Sorrel was broken. His spirit appeared broken to the extent required, or nearly so. His eagerness to do what was wanted of him was pathetically evident. The tall young rancher, however, bearing a wholesome respect for him, did not really trust him. Sorrel's manner of holding his head, and the bitter look of sparkling agony in his eyes, made the young rancher wary and cautious. He had never been the kind of country boy who takes chances for the sheer love of dare-deviltry. He decided not to ride Sorrel, nor certainly not to let his wife ride him, because he had the feeling that some day, when one least expected it, Sorrel would do some devilish thing that might even kill his rider. "We'll let 'im pull in the plough first," the young rancher told his wife, "till he forgets the range."

But the sentimental young woman did not feel that way at all. Having been reared on a ranch in eastern Washington where there had been three healthy, plucky boys, having seen the worst broncoes turn tame under their management, Sorrel did not appear a bad sort in the least. Her sympathy for him during the ordeal of breaking-in had been

great enough to express itself in deeply felt tears. There seemed nothing more desirable to her than riding this colt who, she felt, was responsible for the romance of her life.

When the men were not about, she would go to the barn, and climbing into the manger, where she was safe, she would hold the halter shank and stroke Sorrel's nose and talk to him softly and endearingly. Sorrel would pull back and into his eyes would come a sullen, hurt look which would only stir her sentiments deeper, and intensify her resolve to win him over with kindness, convince him of her love for him. He would not eat the carrots she offered him, but she would bring them again and again; and one day she offered him an apple. As Sorrel sniffed at it, there came into his eyes a sparkle as of fear. His eyes dilated and he whinnied loud, his whinny fairly making the walls of the barn vibrate. The young woman went out of the manger and back to the house with an uncanny feeling. That night in the hush of darkness, broken only by the distant croaking of frogs, she reported the incident to her husband.

"Really, he did act funny, Ed, when I gave 'im that apple," she said. "Y'u s'pose he remembered——"

"Naw," laughed the rancher quietly. "Remember nothin'. It's a wonder to me he didn't snap up y'ur hand an' all."

"Aw," she protested, "he wouldn't hurt anybody."

"You won't believe it till he does it. Why don't you leave 'im alone, Floss?"

"You're beginning to talk to me like the farmers around here talk to their women," said Flossie, tears in her voice.

"No, I'm not, dear," he said meckly. "I'm plumb worried about your goin' near 'im all the time. I never saw a horse take on the way he did at breakin'-in. We had t' throw 'im three times, an' most horses'll behave when y'u do it once. He's got the devil in 'im, that feller, nice as he is."

"Don't say such a horrid thing, Ed," she whimpered. "Got the *devil* in 'im. He didn't have any devil in 'im when you—remember what a lovely, fuzzy thing he was that Sunday, by the river. He brought us together, Ed. Men don't think about things like that; but I'll never forget. I liked you because of the way you held your arm around him, gentle-like; and you said you liked me because o' the fuss I made over 'im—now you think it's all foolish. You men have no memories at all."

"I didn't forget, dear," he whispered tenderly, putting his arm about her neck and drawing her to him, till her wavy hair pressed into his face.

"Then don't ever talk o' the devil in our dear Prince, will y'u, Ed? He was so cute that day. It was such a happy day for us. You said nobody'd ever ride 'im but you an' I. You promised lots o' things, that day, you naughty boy. That's the way you men are."

"But I don't want 'im to kill you, just because I promised. We should 'a' got 'im last year; it would 'a' been altogether different. Since that

time, running wild the way he did, he got the——”

“Don’t say devil in ’im, Ed, please don’t—makes me feel awfully bad.”

“No, I won’t, dear,” he chuckled, pulling her to him, and kissing her.

## CHAPTER XI

### PLOUGH AND SADDLE

**T**HROUGH the immutable order of command, disobedience, and the whip, Sorrel found his way from one disagreeable task to another. He began to devour the grain and the stale hay which was thrown into his manger with an eagerness that was almost gratitude, and he would drink twice the amount of water he had been in the habit of drinking, when an opportunity to drink came along, remembering hours of tormenting thirst when toil and rope and harness made going for a drink impossible.

Within the short time of a month, Sorrel's life had fallen into the routine of a relentless succession of tasks, which moved so swiftly, one upon the other, that to Sorrel they appeared one and the same continuous thing. The stall he had hated intensely when he was first moved from the corral, became a haven of refuge from the strain and torture of a labour in which he had no interest, its warm, nauseating smell ceasing to bother him.

Dragged out of that stall at dawn, the harness falling with a thud upon his back, the bridle encmeshing his head, the iron bit chafing his tongue, the plough resisting his struggle to go forward as commanded, pulling at his vitals as if determined to pull them out of his body, he was too weary at



night, too thirsty and hungry to have any mind left for the problem of getting away ; yet he never lifted a tired eye, never looked upon the hills rolling off into space, without experiencing a momentary hope of escape.

Thirst, drying his dust-harried throat, subdued his hunger pangs. When at last at the trough, the desire for water was satiated, he gave himself over wholly to the desire for oats and hay, next in importance ; and a full stomach left his mind free to turn to the need for rest. His gnawing dissatisfaction with life yielded to the paramount need of recuperation. A provident nature intensified the overwhelming hold of drowsiness, belittled his heartaches and his yearnings, so that the violated tissues in his overstrained muscles might rebuild themselves, and he might endure the toil of the next day.

And as the days rolled by, many of the terrors of the first week on the ranch abated or disappeared. Noises that had driven him into a frenzy of fear ceased to more than startle him. Such sounds as laughter and talking, the continual barking of the pestiferous dog, the mooing of cattle and calves, the squealing and grunting of pigs, the cackling of hens and the crowing of roosters, after all did not harm him, and so became harmless to him, and he ceased to notice them.

The everlasting laughter and talking of men, a welter of meaningless noises, at first, began to separate into units, words that slowly took on meaning to him. He learned that the explosive, "Getup" meant that he must start away, that the startling, if welcome, "Whoa" meant that he must

stop. He began to realize that every time they made the ringing sound of, "Prince," they were concerned about him. At the sound of any one of these words, his ears would go up, his eyes would open wider, and he'd become nervously wary about the right thing to do or not to do. His entire consciousness divided itself, as the nebulous seas first separated from the land, into the things that he must do, and the things that he must not do. In this learning through the pain at the end of the whip, his resentment, his dissatisfaction with his existence, all the fires of rebellion were reduced to one operation, a single expression—the futile and meaningless champing of the bit.

Whether he pulled the plough or dragged the wagon, so long the disagreeable bit was in his mouth, he champed away as if it were the most important task of his life; and often, in the dead hours of the night, while he drowsed unbridled, he'd continue his habitual champing. He would wake from his sleep, experiencing an aching weariness in his teeth and jaw, as if he had champed an imaginary bit all night long.

Sometimes in the yard, or at the trough, he would come upon Pinto. Generally he did not even greet her. That he didn't ever see the fuzzy little colt who was to blame for his capture, did not enter his mind. The death that had rendered motionless the mouse-coloured colt, half-way up the pointed hill, and the old buckskin plug down in the hollow, took many things out of existence and was as natural and immutable a process as the eternal passing of day. Pinto, herself, as far as his mind concerned itself with her had partially died, coming back to life only

when circumstances brought her, for the moment, near him.

Sometimes, driven into the ranch yard from the fields, just when the rancher's wife on Pinto was coming down the lane from the cow-pasture, behind a string of cows, a light would suddenly flare up in



The two horses raced across the range, the wind whistling by them.

the darkness of Sorrel's being. He would raise his head high and let out a call that would set the hills echoing. Pinto would raise her head and respond in the old manner which used to set his soul afire. Sorrel would look at her, puzzled, and without knowing why, prance about restlessly, and the

hired man would pull the long lines angrily, lash his side with them, and yell out at him, "Behave yourself, Prince!"

Then came a Sunday in August when Sorrel was taken out of the barn and tied to a post in the yard, close to where Pinto was tied. The tall young rancher stroked Sorrel's fur with the curry comb and brush. Where the harness had dug into his fur, and the skin itched, Sorrel enjoyed the scratching of the comb; and a feeling of cleanliness made him more comfortable than he had been for a long time. When the saddle was put on his back, he did not like it; but he had learned much about the futility of protesting.

The rancher's wife came out and mounted Pinto, and the rancher mounted Sorrel. At first, the oddness of having someone on his back, having spent months pulling the plough, irritated him; but Pinto was close beside him, enduring her burden; and so, like her, he endured it. They were driven into the avenue between the barbed-wire fences, and with great excitement, they trotted away toward the rangeland.

So thrilled was Sorrel by the sight of the familiar old range hills, that he almost lost his head. With a fervid call through his teeth, which he clamped on the iron bit, he loped forward; and the two horses raced across the range, the wind whistling by them, the rancher and his wife exchanging expressions of their pleasure, in high-pitched shrieking.

At the canyon lip, when Sorrel first beheld the scene, blurred by the mist of summer warmth, which seemed to rise as in faint white clouds from the

surface of the river, saw the familiar shadows between the clumps of trees, the bushes and the boulders, smelled the intoxicating aroma of clear air, leaves and water, hatred for the creature on his back swept over him in a flood of revulsion, and he tore down the canyon wall, determined to throw him from his back, to leap into his beloved river and to save himself from the torture of the preceding months.

But the rancher's grip upon the reins told in the pressure of the bit on the tongue and in the corners of his lips, and Sorrel realized, as he had realized so many times before, that rebellion would only end in pain and defeat. Nevertheless, at the shore, the desire to go through the stream and race away on the old sand-bar became so intense, that despite the warning of experience, despite the boring of the iron loop of the bit on his tongue and the crimson froth at his lips, he splashed recklessly into the water. Pinto followed him and the sound of laughter from the two riders only urged them on.

The stream was shallow at that time of the year. The splashing barely got the riders' new boots wet. On the sand-bar, the rancher actually loosened his hold of the reins, and Sorrel, like a thing gone mad, tore westward over the sand, the clods shooting from his hoofs. Pinto, not so worn by toil as Sorrel, kept right abreast of him.

At the extreme west end of the sand-bar, Sorrel was still too excited to be willing to walk slowly. The rancher turned him about, and back cast, up the sand-bar, they went as fast as they had come. Until Sorrel was almost worn out, the rancher raced him up and down the sand-bar; then, refusing to

him drink, he forced him across the stream to shore ; and there, dismounting, he tied him to a tree, beside Pinto.

After the rancher and his wife had eaten their picnic lunch, having brought a bag of oats with them, they watered and fed Sorrel and Pinto ; then they let them stand close together in the shadow of the trees, where they had roamed at will in the happier days of their freedom. Towards evening they came and mounted them again. Up the canyon wall Sorrel went, pulling and grunting, tirelessly and unhappily. His desire to go freely ranging over space, to see the old hills by himself, to look at the old landmarks, drove him to insidious and fearful efforts to throw his rider. Across the range, he sped unwillingly, making a dozen attempts to turn about and go back to the canyon, earning on each attempt a severer jerk on the reins, which only aggravated the exquisite soreness in his mouth and jaws. At the gateway to the avenue between the barbed-wire fences, he made his most violent attempt to throw the rancher and go tearing back to the river. He did go tearing back, Pinto beside him, but the rancher gave him all the opportunity of gallop that he wanted ; and in the end, wet with perspiration from head to foot, completely worn out, he brought him back to the avenue opening, and, now, to think of refuge in a stall.

While his rebelliousness, without his knowing it, had nearly sent him back to harness and the plough, Sorrel soon learned that in the saddle as in the plough his every attempt to rebel must end in failure. Always spirited, always head high, neighing without purpose across the vaguely remembered

range of his happier colthood, Sorrel became tame; and one Sunday early in September he carried the rancher's wife, radiant with joy, to the river shore and back again.

During the harvest period on the ranch Sorrel enjoyed comparative leisure, taking the rancher's wife to the cow pasture evenings, driving the cows back to the barn, spending most of the rest of the days in the corral with Pinto.

When the heavy ranch labour subsided, in the colder weather of autumn, the rancher and his wife went off on many a trip with the two of them. Snows began to fall, making the coziness of the stall most desirable; and Sorrel spent many a contented hour in the stall next to Pinto's, chewing on stray bits of hay, or kernels of oats, overlooked at meal time, feeling the old dissatisfaction with his life more vaguely, less painfully, almost resigned to things as they were, while the winds shrieked without, and the snow showers slid down the barn roof with a cold rasping sound.

A long grey winter followed, made interesting by trips with Pinto, to the little school house in the district, where the farmers held their dances and parties. Sorrel spent many a night in the school yard beside Pinto and other horses tied to a fence post, in the light of the school-house windows, listening to the strange noises that came from within, shifting his weight from foot to foot, waiting, waiting, waiting. Always Sorrel leaped forward to the trip, eager to go from the monotony of the barn, always he called out into the cold monotonous nights to be taken back again to the barn. Somehow these trips never measured up to expectations.

hing ever seemed quite satisfying. Always  
ething seemed to be missing. Something he  
ted had gone out of life, appeared forever form-  
elusive and unreachable.

he long winter passed away.



## CHAPTER XII

### FEAR OF THE THING THAT WOULD SET HIM FREE

**B**Y the following spring, Sorrel was a different creature from the thing he had been on the range. Physically, he appeared perfect. His muscles were strong, his spirit wild, its manifestations magnificent. He set his feet down with the precision of piano hammers, and he arched his neck with supreme grace. He seemed to go into his stall willingly, and he always came out of the barn eagerly. He drank water at the trough as he ate his oats at the manger, with perfect enjoyment; and he leaped forward so enthusiastically when he was being mounted, that his riders loved him for his apparent willingness to run.

And yet there was something in the nervous champing of his bit that passed over the heads of his wiser masters, that manifested a blind, inarticulate resentment against the limitations he no longer resisted.

It was a most delightful spring. The rancher and his hired men had been so busy for weeks, the rancher's wife so completely occupied with the making of meals for three big men, that the saddle ponies not only had no work to do, but failed to get the exercise they needed. Day after day, Sorrel and Pinto stood in their two stalls, smelling the aroma of spring growth as it came floating into the

ning barn on soft warm breezes. Calling out shyly, Sorrel would crane his neck, look out of wide barn doorway, across rolling space, and of the canyon, the hills, the boulders and trees bushes, the stream of the river and the sand-and a tormenting impatience would seize him, would pull at the rope of his halter till the of his head and neck were wrenched. When the barn spaces rattling with his fervid cries, Pinto would take up the cry, and the would resound with the expression of their feelings. The rancher's wife, setting her pies into oven, would mutter : " I must go out an' water -it's a shame."

was along toward the middle of May. The rancher had gone off to town to see whether he could strike a bargain with a man who wanted to buy a tractor. He had asked his wife, before going that morning, to pray that he would be able to make the necessary deal. She had thought about it through her busy hours. She was thinking of it, all her usual sentiment, when throwing her apron over her head she ran out to the barn. As she went into to the watering trough she heard the rattling *chug-chug* of the tractor coming along the road from Peck. She was so eager to run to meet her husband that she wanted Pinto to hurry ; but he drank deep, long draughts, and raising her head she pricked her ears and listened nervously to the strange sound which kept coming closer and

Finally, with a guilty conscience, the young man lost patience with Pinto, and pulling her from the trough led her back into the barn.

She was afraid that if she didn't water Sorrel now, she would forget about him in the excitement of seeing the tractor, which, by its very presence, had enhanced the prosperousness of the ranch, and placed her young husband in the small group of successful farmers.

She ran into Sorrel's stall. Sorrel appeared nervous, prancing about, pulling back on the halter rope; but Sorrel was a spirited horse and his behaviour did not strike her preoccupied mind as unusual. The halter rope was tied ridiculously hard to the manger. The new young hired man was to blame for that. He was an awful dub, she felt; he did everything so as to give a body trouble. She struggled with her delicate fingers to untie a knot she was not used to; and all the while the sound of the chugging was growing louder, coming nearer.

She managed to undo the knot at last, and hastily pulling the rope through the hole in the manger beam, she backed Sorrel out and started for the doorway, eager to see if her husband had already reached the ranchyard.

Sorrel came to the wide-open doorway, the skin quivering on his flanks. He didn't like the strange sound that was filling up the air of the world. The pungent smell of hot oil and gasoline smoke bewildered him. And just as he broke through the barn doorway, behind the young woman, he saw a giant serpent-like monster turning noisily around the corner of the house, setting its feelers and tentacles, its head and mouth in his direction, its dreadful eyes upon him.

Sorrel reared upon his hind legs so suddenly that



Sorrel reared upon his hind legs so suddenly that he tore the rope out of the woman's hands.



he tore the rope out of the woman's hands before she knew it. She turned around to get hold of the rope again, but seeing his two front hoofs high above her head she jumped to the side of the doorway.

The monstrous thing was coming toward the centre of the yard—upon him. With a crazed toss of his head, Sorrel turned and raced back into the barn ; but when he got half-way inside of it, he saw the rear door wide open and he swept through it like a shot, into the cow corral. The gate of that corral, through which the cows had been driven out to the open range south of the ranch that morning, stood wide open. Before he fully realized what he was doing, Sorrel was loping over space a quarter of a mile south of the ranch. When he finally dared to stop and look back and saw that the tractor monster was not pursuing him, he started timidly back again.

But as he went, a step at a time, sniffing the air for the pungent odour of the tractor, and smelling the intoxicating aroma of the free open world, a strange feeling came over him. He realized suddenly that he was free to go where he willed. He was conscious of the fact that he had done wrong, that he had done something the rancher did not want him to do ; and he had learned well enough that pain was the inevitable wages of wrongdoing. While there had grown up certain attachments to the rancher and the ranch, the gloomy period of his bondage had exalted the life he had been so rudely torn from. Along with the overwhelming desire to go back to the rangeland, the canyon and the river, came flashing sensations of escaping man, of fording

the stream, of swimming the river, or moving freely through the sunlit spaces.

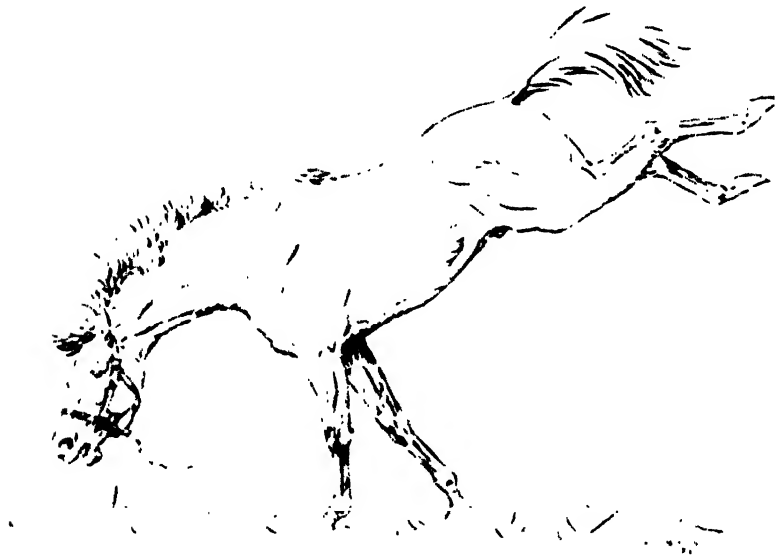
Turning eastward, he loped now with backward and sideways glances toward the ranch, till he was half a mile east of the ranchyard, then he turned north and headed for the range. At the barbed wire fence he stopped and looked into the range. There were the hills he had known so well, the very shadows appearing familiar, the stones calling through his memory. He turned nervously to look back. No one was as yet coming after him, but he knew that someone would soon be doing so. But how could he get through that fence? He trotted along the fence eastward a way, then broke into a gallop. At the south-east corner of the range fence he saw the strip of woodland which ran north to the canyon, and instinctively dashed for cover of its shadows.

Like a stag he ran through the woodland strip, in and out among the trees, running so fast and so furiously that he was almost insensible to the jerking of his head every time his hoof stepped upon the halter rope dangling from his head. By the time he reached the canyon lip his hoof had eaten away most of the rope, and his movements had become quite free.

Down the canyon slope he went, slipping and sliding, with little thought for anything but the smiling waters of the river, which he saw moving leisurely along the canyon bottom. At the river shore, at last, he stopped and drank deeply. Lifting his head out of the stream, the water dripping from his muzzle, his neck craned with a new grace. His ears pricked with a new desire to listen, his eyes

blazed with the fire of his unexpected triumph. He picked his way along the river shore, stopping to drink out of the sheer joy he took in the liberty of drinking when he pleased, nibbled at leaves here and that that he thought might be edible, turning to look back every few minutes, the muscles of his body expressing the ecstasy of being free.

For several hours Sorrel played along the canyon



For several hours Sorrel played along the canyon bottom.

bottom, enjoying the sunshine and the cooler shadows, thrilled by the freedom he had so often dreamed about ; then a weighty apprehension came over him. The world began to appear bleak and deserted. The shadows, lengthening, began to hide things which seemed just to have moved out of sight.

The canyon slopes along the south shore were rugged and cluttered with rocks and driftwood,



There was little or no grass to be had. Back of him, westward, was the rangeland, but there also were the ranch and the rancher. He stood a long time, looking longingly toward the range. He was lonesome and ill at ease outside of the range fence. He did not feel quite the same about the world at large, now that he had become accustomed to the barnyard, where hay and oats were brought to him from some inexhaustible source.

If he could only get back into the rangeland. There he would be at home. There he would live, hiding among the trees, keeping near the river. There were other horses there, he was sure, for, as he remembered it, he always remembered it alive with horse characters he had known. Even the old buckskin plug, long dead, still stalked strangely through his imaginings.

He started slowly westward, picking his way with greatest care, watching the shadows of the canyon suspiciously, when suddenly, a thousand feet ahead of him, he saw the rancher on Pinto coming out from behind a clump of small trees.

Sorrel turned so abruptly, he reared on his hind legs, and with a recklessness that was dangerous he leaped and ran down the rugged shore, running around trees and bushes to keep himself out of sight as much as possible.

In that blind, thoughtless manner, he fled from the rancher, feeling all the while that the rancher would finally get him, running mainly now, because he was afraid not to run, running till the shadows blended into the dusk of evening, and a melancholy coolness lowered into the canyon.

He came to a spot of grass that encircled a huge,

granite boulder, half-buried in the steep slope. Below it he stopped, turning his head back and studying the deepening shadows behind him a moment, to see where the rancher might be. He was almost as much disappointed in being unable to see anything of the rancher as he would have been had he seen him. With these conflicting emotions, he climbed up to the boulder; and there he spent half the night, grazing peacefully and contentedly.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CANYON CLOSES BEHIND HIM

**I**T was along toward the small hours of the night that Sorrel, weary of plodding alone, in the engulfing darkness, came back to the east range fence, and stopped to look over the barbed wires into the beloved rangeland spaces. He stood looking into the shadows that appeared more cozy and comfortable, listening to the lapping of water on the rocks, gazing from the sparkling white way of the water to the strip of sky above the canyon mouth, and the familiar serrations on the canyon lips. The shadow of a night bird swooped across the strip of sky, its cry breaking the stillness and dying away in the distance. He felt that if he could get into the range, get through that unyielding wire, all the uncanny fears that clung to his very body in the darkness around him would leave him.

It appeared to him suddenly that one of the shadows, some two hundred feet from the fence in the range, had moved. His eyes glared and he hardly breathed as he watched it for further signs of life. Sure enough it did move again and this time he saw that it was what he had hoped, a horse. At once he set the night air reverberating with his fervent call.

The shadow jumped to its feet. For a few minutes it stood looking towards Sorrel; then Sorrel

saw a small colt rise from the ground. Sorrel called again and again. Another shadow, disturbed by his calling, started from the ground a few feet from the first, and another little shadow rose beside it. But instead of coming toward the fence as he wanted them to, the two mothers went leisurely to the river. The night was so still and delightful, the waters singing over the rocks, the trees and boulders motionless as if they were listening, tense with interest.

As the two mares walked towards the river, Sorrel walked their way along with them, on his side of the fence. Many a time had he gone through that water and around those wire ends; and he did want to get back into the range.

Splashing through the stream, he pulled himself up on to the sand-bar, hesitated a moment and then plunged into the main body of the river. The river was so shallow at that time of the year that he was able to wade around the wire ends without wetting his shoulders. Up the sand-bar he went, and so eagerly did he splash into the stream, to get to the rangeland shore, that he frightened the two mares and their colts; and they went racing away westward along the stream.

Sorrel followed them, calling placatingly to them. Finally, the hindmost of the two mares turned and faced him. Sorrel advanced slowly, whinnying as he went. There was a familiar scent to the soft nose of the big red mare who neighed good-naturedly, that set indistinct lights of remembered things and feelings aglow in Sorrel's consciousness. Experiences obscurely alive in his mind came back to him with disturbing sensations of moments when he had

pressed close against her warm body, moments of thrilling relief, when the scent of her banished hosts of overwhelming fears. There came back to him vague sensations of long nights, lying close to her, an uncertain sense of security, long gone, and hours of happy gambolling with Black and White.

But the big red mare was more concerned about her last colt to care about his ardent show of interest. When Sorrel stretched his neck forward to sniff at the little muzzle of the colt, pressed tight against her side, she got in between them and somewhat unconvincingly laid back her ears.

Off a bit, in the soft warm shadows of space, stood the bay mare, and a little bay colt stood close against her, looking interestedly on, the whites of her eyes catching a bit of the skylight. When Sorrel started toward her, the bay mare walked off nervously up the river shore, and the bay colt, afraid, leaped forward and ran on a short distance ahead of her.

Moving along leisurely, they climbed up the canyon wall and for the rest of the night they grazed on the open range above. Dawn came softly, imperceptibly flooding the rangeland of his early life with a soft golden glory. The idea that he could move freely, go wherever his heart desired, the sense of early-morning sweetness, the dew-sparkling grass, deliciously fresh and juicy, made it difficult for Sorrel to stand still and graze sluggishly. He had to move about. An overwhelming curiosity to see everything and to sniff at everything drove him up and down the old familiar hills. The two mares and their colts had dispelled the feeling of loneliness, but their companionship was not quite satisfying. The

range seemed alive with ghostly forms he recognized, which sped down into the hollows when he reached the hill-tops, and drove swiftly up the hill-tops when he raced after them into the hollows, always just breaking out of sight, like specks before the eye.

Up and down and around the range, he wandered, sniffing at the objects on the ground, looking up and looking away, straining to get to the hill-crests, loping down into the hollows; and abruptly, he stopped in a hollow, a dozen feet from an uncanny mass of shadow, surrounded by tall grasses. From the heart of the shadow white bleached bones leered out at him, like little living things, hiding from him. He moved a few steps forward, then stopping again, he looked up the slope toward the peak of the pointed hill. Yes, he expected it. There lay the other heap of bones, in their own little cozy nest of shadow; and through his mind as he looked from one to the other, uncomfortably, stalked a dozen different horse forms, Black, Buckskin, White, running, trotting, walking slowly with head down, always intangible.

He started up to the peak of the pointed hill, going slowly and nervously. Not far from the sinister shadow on the slope, he turned and completely avoided it; and after a moment's survey of the world, from the peak, he trotted off to the west trail. Driven by a morbid curiosity, he went loping along southward up to the very gateway to the avenue between the wires. The gate was closed, or he should have been tempted to sneak into the avenue up to the summit of the slope and look down into the ranchyard.

He sniffed at the gate. He could smell the strong

scent of human hands. It made him uncomfortable. He knew he was not where the rancher wanted him; and he knew there was punishment in store for him. He raised his head above the gate and pressed his shoulders and chest against the wires and stood there for some time looking toward the protuberances beyond the knob. He half-wished he were there in the ranchyard without the worry of being punished.

Suddenly he saw a rider coming up the knob and down the avenue toward him. Sorrel waited till he was no more than a hundred feet away. When he saw that it was not the tall young rancher himself, he was disappointed. It was the hired man who was loud and snappy and rough in his manner of handling horses. Sorrel was afraid of him, but he only walked off leisurely a hundred yards or so east, along the fence. There he stopped, facing the canyon in the north, in such a way as to be able to see what the hired man was doing, and grazed with assumed indifference. He saw the hired man open the gate, remount and come toward him.

When he saw him come toward him, Sorrel became nervous, and started off trotting toward the north. The hired man spurred his saddle-pony and loped north as fast as he could go, to get around him and drive him back. His attempt to get ahead of him angered Sorrel. He hated the hired man anyway. Letting him race northward, Sorrel swerved south of him, and with every drop of energy he could muster, he galloped for the west trail, turned upon it and headed north for the river. The hired man turned as he had turned, but he failed to reach the trail before Sorrel was a good many feet north of

him; and loping as he was, on the trail, Sorrel reached the canyon lip ten minutes or more before *he* did. By the time the hired man came to the canyon lip, Sorrel was down at the river shore.

Until he could hear the man's pony behind him, Sorrel ran eastward; then he turned into the stream and up on the sand-bar. On the sand-bar, while he shook the water from his body, he saw the hired man some distance west crossing the stream. At once Sorrel broke into the main body of the river and beat his way north across it. As he struggled in the deeper water, he could see the man driving his pony in a desperate effort to get to the shore ahead of him. But Sorrel was unencumbered and by this time his resentment against the hired man had flared into fire. He was just as determined to get to the north shore ahead of him, and he succeeded.

He got to the shore but a few minutes ahead of the man, but he was a hundred and fifty feet east of him. Tossing his head defiantly he loped away to the east, and until he came to a small tributary stream that poured into the Clearwater from a break in the canyon in the north, he did not stop to look back. When he had crossed this very small stream and felt a bit safer for having it between him and his pursuer, he stopped to catch his breath and to look back. For several minutes he saw nothing of the hired man, then just as he had begun to think the man had gone back, he saw him coming.

Turning again, he raced now for several miles, till he came to where the great Clearwater forks, to where the North Fork of the Clearwater comes down from the north and pours into the main body of the



river. Where the two rivers met, the waters leaped angrily over a vast clutter of rocks. Sorrel stopped and looked across the mass of white foam with concern. He did not dare cross the North Fork, and he was almost as much afraid to venture into the canyon that seemed to incase it like a dark tunnel, so steep were its walls, so rugged was the canyon bottom with jagged rocks.

Sorrel looked about him. There was no sign of life anywhere. Rocks and trees and bushes stood still in the sunlight and the shadows were motionless. Only the water spilling recklessly over the stones broke the silence that hung like a spell over the canyon; and its angry frothing tirade provoked no fears in him. He was convinced that the hired man had gone back home, but he did not want to risk meeting him by starting back too soon; and so he found a small level spot of gravel and lay down for a rest.

He had been lying there but a short time, when he heard the clatter of iron shoes on the stony shore of the river in the west, and leaping to his feet, he stood looking fearfully westward, till he saw the hired man on his saddle come around a boulder.

Overwhelmed with misgiving, feeling more intensely than ever that he was going to be severely punished, wishing that he had never run away, Sorrel turned and started up the steep canyon on the rocky shore of the North Fork. Going was slow and difficult there. A few rods beyond the fork, he stopped to look back. He saw the hired man in the opening of the canyon, dismounted, throwing stones at him. Sorrel shook his head and went on, over rocks and windfalls, glad to break into a turn in the

river, where he felt the man would not be able to see him.

But when he had rounded the bend, and the hired man was shut off from his view, he only increased his struggle to put distance between them. Bobbing his head with determination, he forged ahead for hours without even stopping to look back. Over huge stones, he went, at times forced into the river itself to get by some of them, hoping that off there in space ahead of him, he would come out of this strange canyon where dead white trees stood up straight, reaching to the skies. But there seemed to be no end to this canyon. The sun reached the zenith and passed over, starting down the afternoon, but the canyon went on, as blind and unbroken as before.

Sorrel began to worry. He stopped in his course at last, looked backward longingly and finally turned about. He felt better with the thought of going home out of this dreadful jungle, away from these dead and unknown spaces cluttered with trees and rocks.

For a long time, he moved slowly, stopping often to look, sniffing for traces of the hired man on the stones; then, firmly convinced that he had gone back to the ranch, he moved along steadily without further looking. But, when he had retraced but half the laborious journey through the unfamiliar canyon, he stopped suddenly, amazed and horrified. Coming around a bend in the canyon were two strange men, prospectors, on horseback. Both men were sitting peculiarly on their saddles, surrounded by white canvas bundles, slowly picking their way over the stones in his direction.

It was as if a door had shut the canyon behind him for ever. How could he pass those two? He turned half-way about and looked across the stream. The river was deep and rough and white with foam. What with the possible difficulties of crossing it, it was so narrow, the men could almost leap across after him. There was nothing for him to do but go on north, away from the rangeland, in the hope that he would come to a break in the canyon, and find some way of getting around them.

Up to a point as far as he had gone before, he went doggedly, keeping out of reach of the prospectors, hoping that the canyon would break open and let him go off to the side; but as he continued, the canyon only appeared more narrow and more solid, the slopes more steep. The skin quivered on his flanks, and he stopped so often to look back at his pursuers, that they gained on him. Almost obviously indifferent to him, they moved along after him with grim determination. In vain did he toss his head and stamp his feet and prance over the stones jerkily and nervously. Look back as he would, they continued moving toward him and he was obliged to flee from them, wrenching his feet and bruising his knees in his haste.

In that frantic manner he moved on till dusk, then turning for the thousandth time to see what his pursuers were doing, he saw both men dismounted. As he watched them, he saw them remove the canvas bundles from their ponies' backs, and tie the ponies to trees. Then he saw them build a fire and the angry smoke soon poured straight across the narrow river, its shadow black against the whiteness of the surface foam.

To Sorrel the canyon was hopelessly shut against retreat. There appeared nothing he could do but go on in the hope that he would eventually come to a way out. He went on as laboriously, if a bit less frenziedly, but when the night lowered deeper, the camp-fire gleaming like a warning in the darkness behind him, he found going very dangerous and very wearying, and coming to a bit of level stretch, he lay down to rest. He lay down so as to face the prospectors and for hours he kept awake, his eyes peering through the darkness, his ears pointing forward.

In the dead of night, waking out of a doze, he got to his feet. First sniffing the air in every direction, he started homeward, as if the prospectors had been only a dream. For a few feet he went rapidly, then he slipped and fell, almost breaking a leg. There seemed to be no use trying to go anywhere in such darkness over such a clutter of stones. He stood still and sniffed and sniffed the air, then as a breeze stirred for a moment, he got a strong whiff of the prospectors' pipes, and their presence came back into the canyon with overwhelming force. Sorrel returned to his miserable bed of pebbles, and there he remained until daybreak.

But with the coming of daylight, the prospectors were up and another camp-fire sent its forbidding smoke across the river. Helpless, Sorrel stood looking at the wall of smoke that shut away the whole world that he knew, until the prospectors, through with their breakfast, repacked their bundles, mounted and continued their slow, tormenting pursuit of him.

There was nothing for Sorrel to do but go on up

the narrow river, farther and farther away from home. He moved along reluctantly, hoping for a way out of his predicament, growing unbearably hungry.

All day long the men kept plodding slowly after him ; and all day long Sorrel's apprehension deepened. The persistency with which they pursued him assured him that they were after him ; and yet they didn't seem as anxious to get hold of him as men usually are. They moved so slowly, with such an air of indifference ; yet do what he would, they came relentlessly onward.

So slowly did they move that he found plenty of time to drink as much as he wanted ; but there was no grass anywhere, and the leaves he nibbled at were pungent and nasty. In vain he stopped his tortuous struggle over the rugged river bed and gazed up the impenetrable walls of the canyon. Had they been more reachable, there was no grass visible on them, anywhere. He saw nothing but boulders and tall, thin, ghostly-dead tree trunks standing straight among the green ones.

He came quite late in the afternoon to a rude corral set up by some forest service packer, for his pack-train of mules. It consisted of a square inclosure made out of young sapling trunks, nailed or tied to trees. In the centre of the corral space was a long bar which had apparently served for a manger ; and under this bar lay a considerable heap of hay. Sorrel stopped at the fence and reaching over into the corral space, sniffed at the hay. Some of it, down below, was rotten, but it was hay ; and to his starved appetite, it smelled most promising.

He made a hasty attempt to step over the sapling

bars, but low as they appeared, they were too high for him. He pushed at them with his chest, but they did not yield. He almost choked himself trying to reach over and grab some of the hay ; and then for fear the prospectors would come up before he got some of it, he started around to the other side of the corral. There he discovered what appeared to



He almost choked himself trying to reach over and grab some hay.

be a gate. He pushed at the upper bar with his nose and it dropped, rolling away into the corral toward the hay. There was still another bar there, but this he could step over.

Over he went with a leap, and inside the corral, he fell upon the hay, seizing such greedy mouthfuls of it, that he could hardly chew it, watching the approaching men with glowing eyes, as he struggled to get as much of it down his stomach as possible.

He went on eating for so much longer a time than he had hoped he might, that it suddenly dawned on him that the prospectors would have reached the corral if they had intended doing so. He raised his head high, and to his surprise, discovered that they had stopped, nearly two hundred feet away. Having seen them camp the night before, he assumed that they had settled down there, and gave himself over to his hay with as much satisfaction as diligence.

He was suddenly startled by a noise right behind him, and turning, he beheld one of the prospectors sliding down a boulder, a few feet *east* of the corral. Puzzled by the fact that the ponies were still standing where they had stopped, he realized with no little anxiety that he was trapped between this man and the other, who, he saw now, had remained with the ponies. He dropped the hay he had in his mouth and began a hasty, frantic search for the opening through which he had come into the corral. But long before he could even find it, the man was there, calmly raising the bar which he had pushed over.

There was nothing for him to do now but go back to the hay, and eat what he could while he waited to see what the man intended to do. As he chewed his hay and watched the grizzly old fellow with fear in his eyes, the man leisurely secured the bar, then lowering himself under it, he shouted to his partner. At once, the two ponies began coming.

When the ponies arrived, Sorrel was glad to see them come into the corral. He sniffed noses with them; and while he found them not particularly friendly, they were not hostile, either. They were

rather wearily indifferent, turning at once to the hay ; and hogging as much space as they could, they began shoving the hay all over the place with their noses.

Outside the corral, the two prospectors talked in queer, loud and exciting tones ; a steady stream of pipe stench issuing from them ; and Sorrel, worried very much about the awful punishment he expected, saw them as they talked, and felt that they were interested in him, in all this excitement.

Then one of the men came into the corral. As soon as Sorrel saw his grizzly face, and smelled his pipe, he moved away nervously. But the old fellow moved after him slowly, talking placatingly, reaching out a hand cautiously, and repeating softly and threateningly : " Whoa, there, whoa."

Sorrel recognized the word, " Whoa," though it sounded quite different from the way the tall young rancher or his hired man spoke it, and he knew that that meant stand still or be punished. While he felt a strong dislike for the old fellow, he stopped and waited for his approach. The man reached out and took hold of the small piece of rope hanging from Sorrel's halter. As soon as he had hold of the rope, the other prospector came into the corral, and joined the first. They pulled his head down and forced another halter over the one he had on his head, one made entirely of rope, then they removed the leather one, and threw it with a splash into the river.

Sorrel did not like his new halter. The rope was hard and it rubbed and annoyed him, but the first sign of discomfort and displeasure earned him a jarring pull on the long rope that hurt his entire



head. Sorrel pulled back a moment, half-shutting his eyes in fear, but he was careful not to pull too far. They tied the rope to the manger bar, and went out of the corral.

Sorrel turned back, half-heartedly to the hay, watching the men through the corners of his eyes, wondering what was going to happen next, taking his capture more easily because he felt quite sure that in the morning they would start back with him to the rangeland and the ranch, where he belonged. That anything else might happen was beyond his power to think.

## CHAPTER XIV

### COLD CONFINING SHADOWS

**A**LL night long, Sorrel stood, tied to the manger bar, gazing at the black cliffs and the grey boulders, and the tall, straight trees, listening to the singing of the river, thinking of his journey back home the next day, fighting the gnats and the flies who seemed to have discovered that he was tied and more nearly helpless. He was sure that he was going back in the morning, and he was most gladdened by the idea of going home. This country of cold confining shadows, of high cliffs and tall trees, did not appeal to him. He longed for sight of the rolling hills, of the range, as if he had been gone from there for many long years. In his mind, he saw the different spots along the North Fork through which he had travelled so laboriously, the two prospectors constantly behind him. He would have to go struggling back over all that difficult clutter of rocks, but in the end he would come to the range. He saw the ranchyard in a flood of summer sunshine. The rancher's kindly wife would come and pet him and give him some carrots. He had forgotten about the monster that chugged and snorted pungent smoke.

The prospectors were up at daybreak. While the men built their camp-fire, and made their breakfast, Sorrel and the other two ponies nosed the

half-rotten hay for bits that were untainted by the rotten parts. Most of the catable hay had long been devoured. But Sorrel would gladly have relinquished better food for the pleasure of going, he was so impatient to start homeward.

The men came at last. Their pipes hanging from their mouths, the smell of them nauseating, they tied ropes around his body, tightening them until Sorrel grunted for discomfort. One by one, they placed all the canvas bundles on his back, tying them to the pack-saddle which they had rigged up for him. The bundles were heavy enough, but what bothered him most was the manner in which they were placed, for they weighed more on one side than on the other, and pulled painfully at certain muscles in his back. Having forgotten most of the torments of plough and wagon, Sorrel remembered mainly the easy life he had led carrying the rancher or his wife in the saddle; and he looked upon this miserable burden on his back and these horrible prospectors as an imposition which he could hardly endure, but he was so eager to start back home that he restrained himself.

The prospectors went about their business utterly oblivious to any feelings Sorrel might or might not have, on what they were doing with him. They took all three of the horses out of the corral to the river and let them drink. Sorrel drank till his sides, distended with water, tightened the cinch so much that it cut into his skin; then anxious to get going on the long journey home, he turned southward and took a hasty step. The man holding him jerked viciously at his rope and shouted angrily at him, then he deliberately turned him around so that he

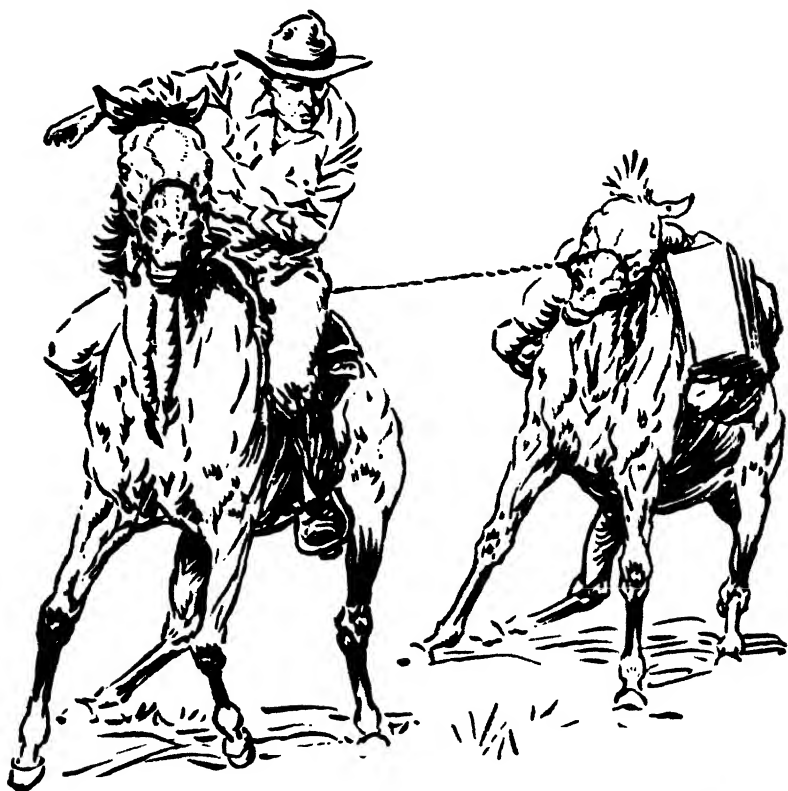
faced northward, away from home, tying the end of his halter rope to the saddle of the pony in front of him.

A dismal misgiving took hold of Sorrel with this turning about. Surely they would turn again the other way, the right way, the only endurable way, when they had mounted. His eyes dilated as with terror and he tried to wait patiently. But when both men were at last in their saddles, they gave the order to go on. The ponies started forward. Sorrel was frantic. He could not go on; he must resist. He braced his body against his forelegs. The resistance nearly tore saddle and man from his pony.

The prospector dismounted. Walking over to Sorrel, and Sorrel had a good idea of what was coming by the way in which he came, he pulled his head down to him, and lifting his heavily booted foot with surprising agility, he struck Sorrel a violent blow on the tender part of the body immediately back of the left leg.

Sorrel groaned for pain, but when the man had remounted and started off again, pain or no pain, he just could not endure the thought of going on, away from home. Whinnying appealingly, protestingly, he braced his legs again, and refused to budge. The first prospector, riding his pony in front of the one to which Sorrel was tied, turned about, and picking his way over the stones passed Sorrel and turned again right behind him. When the second prospector started on, this time, he struck Sorrel on the rump with an improvised whip, laying it with all the cruelty of his self-righteous passion. And although Sorrel hurried over the clutter of rocks faster than

the pony in front of him, who obstructed his way, the wretched old prospector laid his whip to Sorrel's rump, again and again, till Sorrel was on the verge of rebelling for sheer agony.



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The resistance nearly tore saddle and man from his pony.

The whip finally stopped coming down on Sorrel's smarting back; but Sorrel moved on obediently behind the pony leading him, the skin quivering all over him from fear that the whip would come down again, his neck and sides wet with perspiration, his tail swishing at the flies who gathered at the foamy patches, to add their fiery stinging to his full

measure of misery. And all the while, as he plod wearily over the rocks and the windfalls, the waters of the river, splashing and gurgling playfully in the sunshine, moved on past him, going backwards to the range, as he felt he should be doing.

All day he struggled along behind the saddle-pony in front of him, the gnats and the flies growing more pestiferous as they went higher into the mountains and deeper into the forests. In the evening, they camped beside the river, tying Sorrel to a tree a few yards away from the tree to which the other two horses were tied. They gave each of their own horses a measure of oats, but Sorrel waited in vain for his turn. Throughout the night he stood by his tree, complaining because he had not been fed, swishing his tail at the gnats and the flies, nibbling at the bitter bark of the tree trunk.

In the morning, the two saddle-ponies again were fed, while Sorrel looked on and shattered the air above the river with his protests. He stamped his feet and called, but the prospectors did not appear to be hearing him. One of them came over to him finally, and untying his rope, led him to the river. Sorrel took a drink, knowing that that was expected of him, but he raised his head and stared at the two ponies gobbling up the last few kernels of their oats, and neighed hungrily. The man holding the rope shouted at him :

“ Drink, y’u damned Maverick, ‘at’s all y’u get.”

“ Maybe we had ought t’ give ‘im a bit o’ oats,” said the second prospector, coming over to the river shore and looking on, Sorrel anxiously studying his hands.

“ Naw, I’ll be damned if I will,” shouted the

first—his partner was hard of hearing—"we'll be needin' what oats we got. He looks too damned good, anyhow. The ranger up there in the St. Joe'll be suspicioning, if he looks any too good. Besides there'll be grass along soon."

Sorrel was taken back to the tree and tied, and the bundles were replaced on his back. Again the procession started forward over the stones, Sorrel seeing himself rebelling, rearing, breaking away, going racing back toward the range, yet so desperately afraid of the whip, that he followed the pony in front of him with all the appearance of a dogged eagerness to be going. The walls of the canyon seemed to be growing steeper, the shadows colder and more confining, the giant trees reaching higher and higher into the sky.

They came that evening to where the Little North Fork of the Clearwater comes down and breaks into the North Fork, and the canyon walls moved off into the shadowed distance, reaching up, in places, into mountain peaks. Here the forest floor, near the river, was covered with soft, light-green grass.

Removing Sorrel's bundles from his back, one of the prospectors hobbled him. When he let him go and Sorrel discovered that his two front legs were tied together by a rope so small that he could move only a few inches at a time, he began to struggle, but the prospector did not even stop to watch him. He was tied in such a way that he couldn't fight if he wanted to, and he was too hungry and tired, and lacked the necessary energy. The grass was intensely green and attractive in the soft, cold light, and his stomach gnawed. A few kicks and pulls, a few futile tossings of his tired head, and Sorrel sub-

mitted to the hobble as he had submitted to everything else, and gave himself, bitter with disappointment, to the exceedingly important task of putting as much grass down his throat as was possible. When, in the small hours before daybreak, he was too tired to feed, he lay down and dozed. And all through the immeasurable period of his dozing, the water of the Little North Fork of the Clearwater went singing on its way to the North Fork, to the Clearwater, and on past the rangeland.

For several days they followed the twists and turns in the canyon, now going north, now east, always clinging to the river, which to Sorrel remained like a roadway of light, which would eventually take him back home.

Turning north again, the Little North Fork of the Clearwater forked once more and twisting around the foot of Stubtoe Peak went on due west. As they turned west with the river bed, Sorrel allowed himself the hope that they were now going back, homeward, but he half-knew that that was not so. In his mind the entire way back to the range lay clear as the line on a map, white as the winding river itself.

They came late in the afternoon to where Twin Creek splashed over the rocks on the banks of the Little North Fork. Instead of crossing the mouth of the creek, as they had done scores of times, wherever creeks broke into the river, the prospectors turned them up to the forest service trail that lay parallel to the banks. Sorrel was terrified when he found himself obliged to leave the river, but as long as the trail followed it closely, he was able to control himself.

They came to the tiny forest service bridge that



took the trail over the creek, and crossing it, continued for a few rods parallel to the river ; then the prospectors turned off that trail on to a trail that went north at right angles to it. Sorrel stopped. His rope pulled on the saddle of the pony in front of him, pulled so hard that the pony was forced to halt. The prospector was beside himself with rage. " You damned id-yot-ic fool ! " he cried.

But Sorrel was stubborn as a mule. As long as he had had the river singing and moving beside him, he had felt that when he got free, he could find his way back along its course to the rangeland. This turning away from it was like giving him the information that he was never to go home again. He saw the foremost prospector come riding back on his saddle-pony, past him. He knew what that meant. Again the whip would be plied to his rump. But he only moved around nervously.

The whip came down with terrible force. In anger Sorrel kicked out behind him, frightening the pony in back of him. The whip came down again. Again Sorrel kicked, whinnying, pulling on the rope, refusing to be drawn away from the river. The whip came down again and again in quick, angry succession. Kicking, pulling, rearing, throwing himself from side to side, Sorrel went smash up against a tree trunk, tearing the bundles on his left side half-off the pack-saddle.

The prospectors got frightened and began to shout, " Whoa, whoa," in a different tone of voice. Sorrel felt that he was getting the better of them. Tossing his head, he leaped sideways. One of the bundles went down with a clatter of the things in it, the other hung low to the ground. The prospector



Sorrel went smash up against a tree trunk.



on the saddle-pony behind quickly dismounted, and coming toward Sorrel, talked to him placatingly, taking hold of the rope and pulling his head down. Sorrel expected a kick and he was ready to fight, but the prospector only continued his half-frightened, "Whoa, whoa," and the first prospector dismounted too, and for half an hour they worked repacking the bundles.

The bundles repacked, one of the men pulled Sorrel's head down, while the other forced a bridle-bit into his mouth. The bit was irritatingly large, the loop covering much of his tongue. Both men talked so kindly to him, Sorrel was foolish enough to think that he had won out, that as soon as they were through, they would turn back to the river. He began to champ the annoying bit rapidly and nervously and the froth began drivelling from his lips. The men fastened two ropes to the big rings of the bridle, taking each one through the small rings at the end of the levers and tying them together a few inches from the bridle, tying the other ends to the saddle, as before. Then they left Sorrel and remounted.

Again they started off northward into the forest, instead of turning back. Sorrel was determined to resist again, but as the saddle-pony in front took a step forward, the rope pulled the levers on the bridle-bit and the iron loop struck Sorrel a severe blow on the roof of his mouth. The first impulse he experienced was one driving him to rebel more madly than before; but the dreadful loop pressed so forcefully at the roof of his mouth, that he was more eager to get relief from that than anything else in the world. Reduced to a grovelling condition,

by the unendurable boring of the bit, Sorrel trotted swiftly forward toward the saddle-pony; and frustrated once more, he followed the pony, eager to prevent the pulling of the ropes.

For a stretch, the narrow, shaded trail was soft and easy to walk on. It was a great relief after so many days of besetting rocks along the rugged river shore. Then the trail broke out of the forest and wound up-grade, around a nude hill-slope, where the hot sun baked the earth all day. The dust began rising from their hoofs in clouds. Head lowered, close to the saddle-pony's hind legs, Sorrel snorted and sneezed, blowing the dust away and yet inhaling whole streams of it.

A short distance farther on, the trail turned a sharp corner, and in the turn a spring oozed out of the hill-side. A pool of cool, clear water lay in the cut, just off the trail. As they passed, each of the horses stretched out his long neck toward it, but the prospectors kicked at them angrily with their heels and they went on without the water. Near the spring, too, there had been a swarm of little gnats, and Sorrel felt these stinging all over his body. He swished his tail and forgetting himself, he would rush his muzzle to his shoulder to drive some of the pests off. The rope would pull on the levers and the loop would strike the roof of his mouth, and in agony he would run into the saddle-pony in front.

The trail broke into a patch of woodland, reaching down the slope of the hill to the bottom of the ravine at their side, through which the Twin Creek poured along to the Little North Fork. Half-way through this strip of woods, they came to a gate of

sapling bars, tied horizontally to two posts between the slope of the hill on the left and a huge boulder on the right.

While one of the men dismounted to open the gate, Sorrel moved closer to the pony in front of him, then turned his head and bit at some gnats who had been tormenting him, licking the blood away from the sore, where the frying-pan handle in one of the canvas bundles had rubbed a hole in his side. On the other side of the gateway, the prospector riding behind dismounted to close the gate. Again, Sorrel was given a chance to drive off some of the blood-sucking little pests, before they moved on into the open space on the other side of the hill. Where the trail wound round the hill, westward some fifty feet, before it turned north again, Sorrel got his first view of Twin Creek Ranger Station.

He saw a large, flat, swampy valley surrounded by wall-like hills covered with giant timbers. The log-cabin buildings of the ranger station stood in a small group toward the end of the left side of the swampy valley, and at the extreme right side of it ran Twin Creek, its twin branches running side by side, less than fifty feet apart. The trail turned north again, going down into the valley and clinging to the base of the hill-wall, along the west side of the clearing, leading into the yard between the buildings, and going on and off into the woods beyond, to the little town of Avery, some twenty miles north.

Sight of the buildings filled Sorrel with new hope. Experience had taught him on the ranch, that when long journeys came to a decided halt, men turned about and retraced their steps back home. Would

the prospectors, now that they were unmistakably coming to a destination, start back to the river the following morning? Would they go winding around its curves, over the clutter of rocks back to the beloved range?

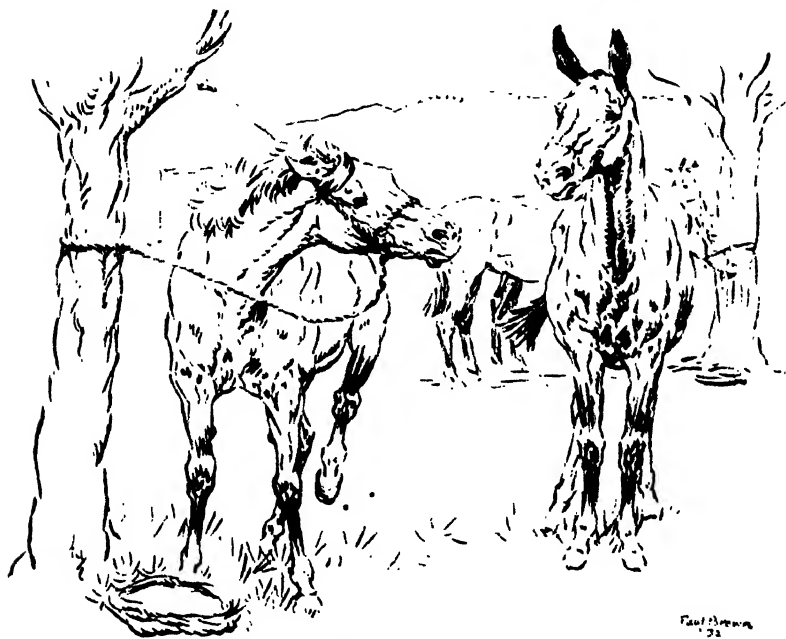
It was early evening. The valley was in shadow, but the light was still good. The trees stood like immobile guards, up and down the hill-slopes, and the twin creeks blinked placidly at the sky, just beyond the oblong strip of green marsh. In the ranger station yard, where the smell of frying ham pervaded the air, a string of sweaty mules were standing, swishing off the flies with their ropy tails, biting at the gnats on the wet spots on their shoulders and sides, and waiting anxiously for the packer in the barn to come out with his oats. The marks of their heavy pack-saddles were still visible on their sides, as they turned their heads curiously and watched the strange procession, pulling into the yard.

The two old prospectors turned their ponies off the trail, in the ranger station yard, and driving toward the barn, at the side, halted and dismounted. One of them walked off to the office building, and the other remained with the horses. Sorrel saw a tall, monstrous man come out of the office building with the prospector. He was an enormous man, fully two heads taller than the prospector and nearly three times as broad. He had a huge hat on his head which he tipped backward with his hand, and his face appeared flaming red, to Sorrel.

The ranger finally waved a hand toward the barn and going off toward one of the other buildings, the prospector came back alone. Sorrel was led off to a

small tree at the side of the barn and tied to it, while the two ponies were tied to another tree nearby. Removing the heavy burden from Sorrel's back, and relieving him of the bridle-bit, they surprised him by giving him a generous measure of oats.

Not since he had run away from the ranch had Sorrel tasted a kernel of oats. As he ate rapidly and



He was a professional beggar, that mule.

excitedly, a mule came walking over, stopping a few feet away, looking on like a beggar. Sorrel laid back his ears. He had hungered for oats too many weary, waiting hours, along the stony trail, to be willing to part with any. Realizing that there was nothing to expect there, the mule walked off toward the two ponies. He was a professional beggar, that mule. The moment the cook appeared back of the cook-shack, he hurried off to him. Sorrel saw that he got



something too, for the cook held up a pail and he stuck his head into it, and all the tribe of beggarly mules ran past Sorrel to join him. •

Twilight lowered as Sorrel finished his meal, and twinkling stars studding the deep blue heavens, yellow lights appeared in the windows of the buildings. The mules and the bell-mare of the pack-train wandered off across the marsh, toward the twin creeks, and there Sorrel saw them, mere black shadows. Then they disappeared. He was forced to stand at the tree, fighting the buffalo-gnats and the mosquitoes, as were the two ponies nearby. Sounds came from the various buildings, loud voices, shouts of laughter, and then the lights went out

There was an old black horse, painfully lame, who wandered about the yard, like a lost soul. He appeared to be a privileged character, for he limped laboriously into the barn and out of the barn, at will, and put his nose into everything that would hold it, all over the yard. He came over to Sorrel and neighing cordially, he sniffed noses with him, then walked off to the two ponies and sniffed noses with them. Most of the night, he remained in sight, lying down, groaning as he lay down, groaning as he rose to his feet, too restless to remain in any one position more than a few minutes. His restlessness as the night dragged by began to worry Sorrel, his clumsy black shadow constantly on the move through the dark spaces repeatedly woke him from his dozing consciousness, relighting the feverish hope in his troubled mind, that at daybreak the prospectors would start back where they had come from.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE LIGHT IN THE HEART OF THE SHADOW

**S**HORTLY before daybreak, the lights reappeared in the building windows and men began moving about the yard. The packer went off into the forest and came back with his mules. The prospectors came and gave Sorrel and the two ponies another mess of oats ; and the air filled up with the smell of frying bacon and coffee. The packer went to the tarpaulin where he kept his feed, and calling to each mule by name, he hung the feed-pail on his head and with a slap of goodwill sent him off, kicking out viciously, now and then, at some greedy fellow, who, unable to wait for his turn, tried to stick his nose into the oats bag. Then the men withdrew to the cook-shack, leaving the entire yard full of horses and mules, to grind away at their oats and to punctuate the expression of their satisfaction with occasional kickings at the ground, and noisy swishing of tails.

After breakfast, the tall, heavy-set ranger, together with the two prospectors, all with tooth-picks sticking out of their mouths, came out of the cook-shack and came over to Sorrel. They stopped a few feet away and regarded Sorrel, talking as they looked at him. Sorrel looked back suspiciously and nervously. There was a redness about the full face of the ranger that gave Sorrel the feeling of fire-

light. He was afraid of this monstrous man. Abruptly, the ranger took a step towards Sorrel's head. Sorrel backed away nervously. The ranger seized the halter rope, and slapping Sorrel a stinging blow on the neck, he pulled his head down to his own face. With the iron grip of his fingers, the ranger took hold of Sorrel's muzzle and pried his teeth apart. As he examined Sorrel's teeth, he kept talking into his mouth, as one might have squirted medicine into his throat.

"Well, he's about four years old," said the ranger. "Been saddle-broke?"

"Sure," said one of the prospectors, unconvincingly.

"We don' exactly know much about 'im," said the second prospector, while the first looked at him angrily, "we got 'im jus' to pack our outfits, but he takes more oats packin' into them mountains, than what he does, packin' for us."

"He eats four times the oats them ponies eat," said the first, taking the cue the other fellow had given him, adding with a grin, "but the gov'ment pays for your oats, that ain't any odds agin 'im here, is it?"

"What's his name?" demanded the ranger, letting go of Sorrel's head, no expression of appreciation for the prospector's humour on his face.

It seemed to take an abnormal length of time for the prospectors to answer that. The ranger turned and looked at the two men with a puzzled look. One of the prospectors turned his head away, embarrassed, the other stuttered:

"Y'u mean th' name we call 'im by?"

"Well, I don't suppose he was baptized."

"Heh, no, I don' s'ppose he was," laughed the prospector uncomfortably. "We got t' callin' 'im, Maverick, so much, I'll be damned if I ain't plumb f'got—What the hell was his name, Bill? You remember?"

"Chollie, they called 'im," muttered the second prospector.

"Well, I tell y'u," said the ranger, stepping back a pace—he had been too preoccupied with the study of this animal to have paid much attention to the embarrassment of the two grizzly travellers—"I'll take a chance. I'll give y'u sixty dollars for 'im. Maybe he's worth more, an' again, maybe he's not worth as much. Y'u may have 'im filled up with arsenic, for all I c'n tell. I'm not in the habit of believing a prospector, if he swore on a whole stack o' bibles. I'm not calling you liars, mind y'u, but a prospector's got his head so plumb full o' dreams, there's no tellin' what he's liable to say, an' mean it. Sixty dollars, that's all."

There was a considerable amount of bickering between the three of them, and then, with a gesture of impatience, the big ranger walked off. But the two prospectors followed him, and Sorrel was glad to see them go. He returned to the ground where his mess of oats had been served to him, in the hope of finding a few stray kernels he might have overlooked, snorting loud, and blowing the dust away with his noisy blasts of air. Finding none, he raised his head and watched the play of life in the sunny ranger station yard, watching the packer saddle his mules and finally go off with them, in a long, lazy, winding string, one mule behind the other.

The two prospectors came out of the ranger

station office, jauntily, and made a dash for the two ponies, whom they saddled hastily, tying all the bundles back of their saddles. 'To Sorrel's disappointment, they mounted and rode off down the trail they had come upon, in the direction of the river, leaving him behind.

Sorrel had vaguely accepted as certainty, the hope that by morning these horrible old men would start back with him to the rangeland. He pranced about wildly, glared after them with dilated, shining eyes, pulled at his rope, and whinnied at the top of his voice, but even the two ponies did not answer him.

Off toward the barn, beside a heap of barn refuse, stood the old black horse, one foot partly raised, dozing lifelessly. As Sorrel grew more and more frenzied in the expression of his disappointment, the old fellow raised his head and neighed in response, but Sorrel was not interested in him. He saw the prospectors pass out between the cook-shack and the barn; then he lost sight of them for a while. They appeared again to the left of the buildings, going up-grade toward where the trail broke into the forest on the hill-side. He watched them go till the rump of the hindmost pony, with its restlessly switching tail, disappeared in the doorway-like shadow, where the trail entered the forest.

A dreadful stillness settled down upon the swampy clearing. The men of the station, all busy out of sight, the ranger's crippled black appeared to be the only creature left. Lifting his swollen feet, the poor discarded old saddle-pony limped over toward Sorrel, and, his head extended horizontally before him, he whinnied placatingly, a low, rumbling, anxious whinny.

There was an acid odour about the black's muzzle that made Sorrel uncomfortable. He turned his head away to stare at the shadow on the hill-side, where the trail entered the forest, hoping to see the prospectors coming back to get him. The ranger's black saddle-pony neighed humbly, and seeing that Sorrel was not interested in him, he turned and lumbered off.

While Sorrel pulled nervously at his halter rope, gazing up the trail, thinking desperately of breaking free and running for the river, but having no notion whatever of how to do so, the ranger came out of his office, his big hat on his head. He walked up to Sorrel and untying the halter rope, led him away to the barn. In the clean, airy barn, where the sun played on the straw bed in the stall, he tied him to the manger. As he took the saddle from the wall, where it was hanging, to put it upon Sorrel, the old black horse came to the doorway, stuck his head in and whinnied. The big ranger dropped the saddle to the straw and turned to his old saddle-horse. Sorrel saw him speaking to him and rubbing his forehead with his hand, then he saw him shooing him off. With a hurt look, the old fellow limped off a few feet, and turned and called complainingly. Just then one of the other men came along. The ranger stopped to talk to him.

"I'll be damned," said the ranger, "if he doesn't want me to take him, poor foolish old Ted."

"He does that, that's plain," said the man, looking off at the unhappy creature. "He'd be better off dead."

"Yes, I guess he's done for. Seems kind o' mean to work the life out of him, and then to shoot 'im."

“ That’s just as kind though, as lettin’ ’im hobble around here, no good to himself, nor anybody else either.”

“ What’ll y’u take for shootin’ ’im for m’e, while I’m gone, Mac ? ” asked the ranger with but a slight raise in his voice.

“ Nothin’ doin’, ranger,” replied Mac, shaking his head significantly.

“ Then dig a hole for ’im up here in the woods, where we buried the old bear. Make it long enough, Mac, an’ have it slant down one side, so’s he c’n walk down into it. I’ll—I’ll do it when I get back, to-morrow ”

Mac took a fleeting look at the crippled black horse, then walked away, muttering to himself, “ Them mountain trails’ll soon do the same for this fellow,” referring to the ranger’s new saddle-horse ; while the ranger, keeping his thoughts unexpressed, went back to his saddling. The saddle fixed tight upon Sorrel’s back, the ranger forced the bridle-bit between his teeth, and the bridle upon his head, then led him out into the yard and up to the office cabin where he tied him to a pillar of the porch.

The ranger then went into the office, from where he soon came out again with several bundles which he tided to the saddle strings on both sides of the saddle. Mac brought him a bag of oats which the ranger added to the other bundles, laying it across Sorrel’s back, behind the saddle. Untying him again, the ranger put his boot into the stirrup and with an agility seldom seen in a man so heavy, he swung his body over and upon the saddle seat.

His weight was terrible. He weighed twice as

much as the tall young rancher. For a few minutes, Sorrel was bewildered by it. He felt as if his back would break ; and yet, the moment the big ranger indicated that he was to take the trail Sorrel had come upon, his eagerness to go overcame his discomfort, and he loped away, grunting for exertion, flakes of white foam coming out upon his neck, as he went.

When he came to where the trail entered the forest and the ranger did not stop him, he was very happy. Now surely he was going home. As the bars obstructed the way, Sorrel was impatient with the delay necessitated by the ranger's dismounting. He was going home and he was foolish enough to think he could lope all the way. He did not like this strange country of cold confining shadows, and he was afraid that the ranger might change his mind before he got to the river. The ranger decided that he had struck a great bargain in buying this spirited, lively saddle-horse.

Around the hill Sorrel went, coming out into an open strip again, turning into another stretch of forest in the damp, cool air of which Sorrel felt the presence of the river. So engrossed was he with the thought of going home, that when he came in sight of the Little North Fork of the Clearwater, and the ranger pulled on the reins indicating his desire to turn on the trail going west, Sorrel disobeyed the order and sprang for the bank of the river.

The ranger, of course, knew nothing of Sorrel's sentiments concerning the rangeland. He had paid for a creature that was supposed to go where he wanted him to go. This whimsy on the part of Sorrel was a characteristic that he would not tolerate



in him. Seizing the reins in one strong hand he jerked them back with such terrific force that Sorrel reared on his hind legs as if the jerk had lifted him off his front legs. But to turn on that trail, to Sorrel, was to go farther away from the rangeland. He did not mean to disobey ; he just couldn't see himself going away from home.

The ranger was exasperated. Jerking the reins with passion, he tore Sorrel's lip and tinged the froth at his muzzle with crimson. Sorrel turned on the trail as ordered, ran a few feet and stopped. He was going away from the river. He must go back to the river if he were ever to get home again. The ranger kicked his heels at Sorrel's sides, but Sorrel baulked.

" I'll show you who's boss ! " cried the ranger.

Pulling on the reins so hard that he drew Sorrel's head back against his chest, he took the ends of the reins and whirled them, striking Sorrel one stinging blow after the other. Sorrel tossed his head with a passion equal to the man's, and deliberately rising on his hind legs high enough to make it hard for the heavy ranger to stay in his seat, he whirled around and started into the woods for the river. The ranger leaped from the saddle, but clung to the reins. Confronting Sorrel with red in his eyes he pulled the reins, drawing his head down, and struck him a blow with his fist squarely on his tender muzzle ; and as the moisture of exquisite agony filled Sorrel's eyes, he kicked him in the side, a kick that resounded through the woods.

The ranger was not a particularly unkind man. He loved horses as horsemen have always done, only for their services to man. A horse that had ideas or



Deliberately rising on his hind legs high enough to make it hard for the heavy ranger to stay in his seat.



feelings or sentiments of his own was not a good horse. He knew that he had to master Sorrel or Sorrel would master him—that was unthinkable. And he did master Sorrel, right there and then. The skin quivering all over his body, the terrified horse followed the impassioned man back to the trail. There, Sorrel waited docilely until the ranger had mounted, then, in mortal terror of further punishment, he went on along the trail, his ears pricked high, his mind painfully alert to any manifestation of will in the big man's manner.

The forest trails were too narrow to lope or trot upon. When the ranger thundered forth a command to go slowly, to go steadily, Sorrel anxiously slowed down, bobbing his head nervously, the crimson froth dripping from his lips, the white flakes in streaks down his neck and shoulders and sides, the heart of him burning with the fire of defeat.

For more than an hour he carried the enormous body of the man through a deep, green forest where the shadows were cold, making the perspiration all over his body disagreeable ; and then he came out into the open of a dead forest, where several miles of forest trees, killed some years before by a forest fire, caught the light and the heat of the blazing sun. Bleached trunks stood naked everywhere, like gigantic skeleton bones, turning the hills into cemeteries.

Through the dead forest they went, baking in the open, into another green forest where the tall timbers shut off the sun, and the deep cathedral shadows appeared cavernous and labyrinthine, astir with skulking forms. Sullen and unhappy, the

weight of the man growing heavier as he went up and down the steep grades, Sorrel bobbed along, plodding over the trail, anxious to avoid any further trouble, snorting for breath, and champing the bridle-bit for relief.

For half the day he walked on monotonously, down into valleys choked with shadows, up steep grades, winding around hill-sides, coming out into the open occasionally for a few moments, going back into the cold confining shadows again. And then, the trail having turned around southward, on a wide curve, they came to the Little North Fork of the Clearwater again. At that point, near its very source, the Little North Fork was as narrow as a creek. It was down in the depths of an elongated valley, and the slopes were gradual and covered thick with very tall timber; yet, somehow, Sorrel knew that this was the same river, the one river, in his mind, whose tortuous, rocky bed would lead him back to the rangeland. So excited did he become, that he momentarily forgot the pain he had earned earlier in the day, and impulsively turned off the trail and leaped over the rocks, eastward, a few paces. But this conflict did not last long. One jerk at the reins, one severe pull at the torn lips, slowly healing, one savage blow with a powerful heel, and Sorrel came to his senses.

He turned back more swiftly than eagerly, went clear across the narrow stream as ordered, and trotted up the trail, his agitation puzzling the man who sat in control upon him.

From the river the trail led through a vast jungle, where the trees by the countless millions stood straight and tall reaching out to the sky, swaying

softly in the oceanic depths of solitude. Up and down grade he went in the deep, green coldness of the shadows; and then his trail began rising steadily; up-grade. The weight on his back grew cruelly heavier, bearing down upon him, as the grade grew steeper. Then the trail broke out of and into clumps of timber, by turns, and he began to see more and more of the valley through which he had groped, its tall tree-tops now appearing below him, his unhappy eyes looking timidly off into the bluish spaces above them.

Monumental Buttes is the highest of the mountain peaks in the St. Joe National Forest. The most important of the look-out stations of the forest being there, Sorrel was destined to carry his burden across his beloved river and up that steep grade, many and many a time, until he was to know every turn in the trail, and recognize a thousand landmarks that impressed themselves on his mind.

It was late in the afternoon when Sorrel, so completely worn-out that the ranger, out of pity, dismounted and walked, came to the last thousand feet of steep grade to the peak of the south butte. And when at last they reached the look-out station, where the glass tower was perched on a huge pile of rocks, the ranger was not afraid to let him stand untied, merely dropping the reins to the ground in front of him, knowing that he would not undertake to run away.

The bundles were removed from his back, and he was given a large mess of oats, but hungry as he was, he hardly had the energy necessary to eat it. Never had he gone through such a day. Even pulling the plough in the fields, on the ranch, back in his early

days of captivity, had been easy by comparison with this torturing journey up to that mountain peak, with such a staggering load. The joints of his fore-legs burned and vibrated, and the muscles along his back ached and gnawed. His head was hot and a burning thirst scorched his throat.

He was finally tied to a small stunted tree, about a hundred feet from the look-out. A short, bearded young man met the ranger and the two of them disappeared in the doorway of the look-out. While the smell of frying bacon and coffee came pouring out of the many windows of the tower, Sorrel ate his oats listlessly and looked down into the valley south of the butte, where he made out the blueness of Steamboat Lake.

After their evening meal, the two men came out again. They resaddled Sorrel, and thinking that he was to be forced to go all the way back to Twin Creek Ranger Station, Sorrel was overcome by a corroding sullenness. But they only fastened two empty water-bags to the saddle, and both men walking, started down the south slope toward Steamboat Lake. The sun had already dropped below the peaks in the west, but a golden hue shot across the vast open mouth of the valley, throwing a cragged shadow half-way across the lake.

The mountain declivity down to the lake was so dangerously steep, that it was necessary to zigzag continually among the crags and boulders to keep from slipping and sliding. But while this journey, coming as it did after so short a rest, almost disjointed Sorrel, he was eager to get to the water, and for nearly ten minutes he drank steadily without stopping. The water-bags were filled and retied to

the saddle, and then the racking climb back, up the stony slope to the look-out, began.

It was dark when, at last, Sorrel staggered up the last few feet of mountain wall and dragged his trembling legs to the tree, where he was tied for the night. All night long, under the starry sky, in the shrieking mountain wind, he stood, too much afraid of the strange vibrations of the peak to allow himself to doze, enduring the loneliness silently, so long as the reddish yellow kerosene light came through the windows of the tower, assuring him that the ranger was within hearing.

When the tower went dark, he was taken by the feeling that he was left all alone on this dead peak world, and he began to whinny his protest. As he called, the sound of his own voice came back to him in echoes from the distant crags, in the dismal shrieking of the wind against the corners of the look-out. The utter lifelessness of the oceanic spaces that fell away from his very feet into the abysmal darkness of the valleys, worried him so that he could not refrain from calling. As he called futilely, looking everywhere and seeing nothing, the Little North Fork of the Clearwater lay in his mind, a silvery light in the blackness of the forest, pointing the way home, making this strange, foreign world harder to endure.

The journey back to the ranger station, next day, was especially hard, because the night had given him no rest. The day was hot and sultry and the trail seemed to break out into the open spaces more often than the day before. The sun, in the open, blazed with stinging cruelty, bringing the unrelieving foam out upon his neck and shoulders and under



the saddle blanket, where the ranger's enormous weight ground upon the wet spots. This sun heat out in the open gave Sorrel his first love for the great forest, which he was to know so well, for when the sun had scorched his head and neck a while, he was glad to get back into the cool, green shadows between the tall protecting timbers.

He was allowed to stop and drink when he reached the Little North Fork of the Clearwater; and as he rested between draughts, the water dripping back to the river from his wet muzzle, he pricked his ears, and looked yearningly into the alluring space where the river came to a point in the mass of trees. The ranger wearied of his dreaming, and ordered him to go on, striking him with both heels impatiently.

It was late afternoon again before Sorrel got to where Twin Creek splashed over the rocky banks of the broader Little North Fork, and with a whinny of anguish, turned obediently on the trail to the ranger station. That night he rested well in the airy little log-cabin barn of the ranger station, quite convinced now that there was little chance for him to be taking the river trail back to the beloved range-land of his colthood, though the long, narrow whiteness of that river glowed like a light in the darkness of his weariness.

## CHAPTER XVI

### EXALTATION IN THE RIVER'S LIGHT

**V**ERY early the next morning Mac came into the barn, took Sorrel out to the creek to water, and returning him to the barn, gave him a mess of oats and a manger full of hay. He hadn't been gone but a few minutes when the crippled black saddle-horse came limping painfully into the barn. At first Sorrel was glad to have him come, just to have someone else near; but his struggling to get into the stall beside him worried him. The old black pushed his greedy nose right into Sorrel's oats box. For a few minutes Sorrel endured his pilfering, then, seeing that the supply of oats was rapidly going, he laid back his ears and kicked angrily at the floor. The black horse backed out of the stall timidly, and stood behind Sorrel, grinding away at the grains still in his mouth. He tried to get into the stall again, but Sorrel would not let him. Then the ranger came along.

Sorrel craned his neck to look, and he saw the ranger giving the black fellow a lot of oats in a box a few feet from the barn doorway. The old fellow gobbled the oats so fast, took so much at a time that when he raised his head it dripped back, half-wet, into the box. Both the ranger and Mac stood close by, watching him eat. While Sorrel, much interested, looked on, he saw the ranger put a rope

around Black's neck ; and as soon as the oats were eaten they led him away.

Now that his own oats were all gone, Sorrel hated to see Black led away. After all, the miserable old fellow was the only other horse at the ranger station. He called to him feelingly as he saw him go off in the sunlight, against the dark green of the forest wall ; and he hoped he would be turning around and coming back. He kept his neck craned, calling louder and louder as they moved off. And then he grew weary craning his neck, and went at his hay in the manger, only to turn and stare again, after a few hearty mouthfuls. When he looked one time, the men and the horse had vanished. All he could see was a wall of forest-clad hill, straight, tall tree trunks with green shadows between. He continued looking, however, chewing the hay in his mouth, when he was startled by the report of a gun which rang through the forest. He jumped nervously from side to side of his stall and turned to look again. There was a second report of a gun soon after, and then for a long time there was silence.

The noise of the gun worried Sorrel in a strange, intuitive way. He returned to his hay, but he did so nervously, and as soon as he had another mouthful he craned his neck again. Then he saw the two men coming back, without Black. Hardly knowing why, he moved about his stall restlessly, looking back until his neck began to ache.

The men disappeared and a heavy silence lowered upon the swampy valley, filling Sorrel with loneliness. Instead of resting, all day, he moved about his stall anxiously, calling till he shook the barn walls, pulling at his rope, thinking of the river and



He saw the ranger giving the black fellow a lot of oats in a box.



seeing himself moving over the dim, rocky way, looking back to the forest wall where Black had vanished, from time to time ; but the poor old limping fellow did not reappear.

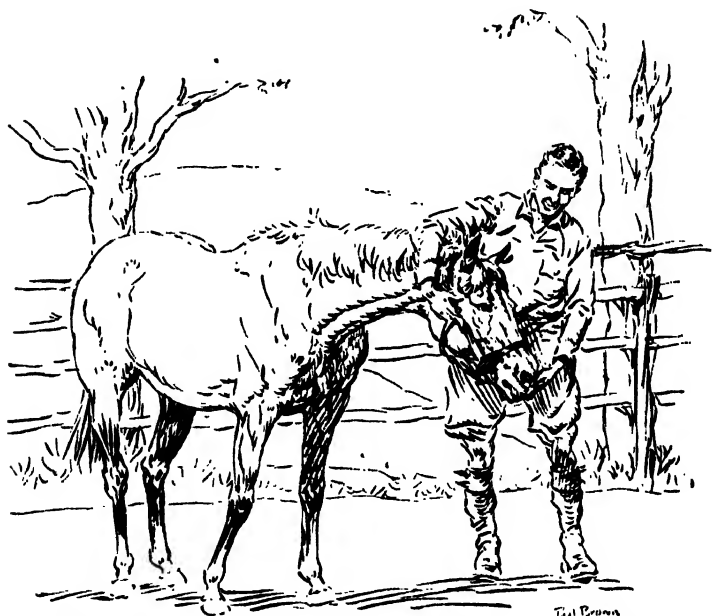
Packers came once or twice a week, each with his single saddle-horse and his string of sweaty, quarrelsome mules. Occasionally various forest service officials would come riding into the ranger station, and some saddle-horse would be placed in the stall next to Sorrel, giving him the pleasure of a fleeting bit of companionship ; but the limping, black horse never came back again.

While the steep grades on the long journeys to and from the various mountain peaks, to and from fires that broke out on the mountain-sides or down in the valleys, strained his muscles and the joints of his legs, there were periods of several days at a time in which Sorrel remained in the barn and rested. During these dull monotonous hours, the sunshine almost droning on the golden straw, he spent his energy yearning for companionship, dwelling on the winding river which he could not forget. He would pick his way over the stones, in his mind, and go panting as on a treadmill, for ever going, always remaining in the barn, the rangeland of his birth persisting hopelessly out of reach.

Not particularly happy there at the remote ranger station, a certain fearfulness Sorrel had experienced at the first went out of his life. He had learned that by obeying the ranger, the big man's only cruelty consisted of his weight. He was rarely unkind, and while he did flare up easily, and did rebuke Sorrel with a slap or a loud, angry word, he never kicked him again. Sorrel came to know his idiosyncrasies

and to avoid doing those things that were liable to anger him. He learned perfectly the thousand little signs by which the ranger expressed his wishes, and he learned the meaning of a number of words.

Life for Sorrel once more fell into a toilsome regularity, in which the many journeys he was constantly obliged to make throughout the forest



The telephone operator . . . spent considerable time petting him

were not entirely without their bits of pleasure. The cook, at Twin Creek, took a liking to him and was for ever bringing him some little delicacy. The telephone operator, tied down to the ranger station, having nothing else to do, spent considerable time petting him and giving him bits of sugar. Wherever he went to the various look-outs and smoke-chasers' cabins, the men, living a more lonely life than he,

showered affection they might have had for their own kind upon him, giving him, often slyly, a bit more oats than they were supposed to, taking him to springs for water, feeding him anything and everything that they thought might please his taste.

Sorrel began to know the St. Joe National Forest as perfectly as he had known the rangeland on the Clearwater River. He knew, almost as soon as the ranger mounted him, whether he was going to the town of Avery, some twenty miles north, or whether he was going to Marble Mountain, Monumental Buttes, or Stubtoe Peak. He knew Bear Skull Peak, Bathtub Mountain, Thor Mountain, all of them, his mind as graphic as a map, with trails and creeks for lines, and sensations of peculiarities for each of the peaks. To get on to most of these trails, he had to take the trail going south of the ranger station to where it branched on the shores of the Little North Fork of the Clearwater; and he never caught a glimpse of the white shining bend of that little river but the old desire to run back home flared up within him like a fire. The ranger had become so accustomed to his strange excitement, to his anxious whinnies when he came to that spot, that he ceased to think it meant anything at all.

The worst experience that summer was his contact with forest fires. He was obliged to carry the ranger to every fire; but no matter how many fires he saw, Sorrel never got used to them, dreading them more as his experiences with them increased. He would be forced to stand for hours in the woods, tied to some tree, while the ranger was on the fire-line, directing his men. Waiting for his return,



Sorrel would champ his bridle-bit nervously, till his jaws would ache, the hot snarling of the flames among the trees distracting him, the whiffs of smoke, coming around occasionally, driving him into fruitless attempts to break free.

The sunny days of summer, with their cold mountain nights, gave way to gloomy days of autumn, when the winds went wailing through the forests, and the giant timbers swayed and creaked. The clouds that kept the skies almost continually dull, dripped sporadic rains, and the forest trails became muddy. The gentle lapping of the Little North Fork of the Clearwater, distended into the roar of a river, and the look-outs and the smoke-chasers began coming down from their mountain cabins.

Then one day, the desultory rain having given way to a steady snowfall, the ranger loaded Sorrel with bundles, and mounting, rode off north, on the trail to Avery.

Sorrel, of course, feared and disliked the noisy little town, with its black and glittering railroad tracks, its noisy locomotives, and the shaky suspension bridge which hung from canyon wall to canyon wall, over the white, broad stream of the St. Joe River. The several trips he had been obliged to take into Avery during the summer had failed to mitigate his fear of the noisy activity of the town. Within the first few weeks of living there, however, he became well enough accustomed to it to be able to make his way along the single street at the base of the canyon wall, without becoming so nervous as to invoke the displeasure of the ranger.

While the noisy town was disagreeable at best, he

did have companionship there, in the big stables of the forest service, half-way up the canyon wall. Every day for a few hours all the horses not in use, as well as all the packers' mules, were turned out into a large corral. There, Sorrel made the acquaintanceship of some of the other rangers' saddle-horses. He would sniff noses with them, stand for hours quietly beside them, enjoying their nearness, or he would exchange such services as scratching backs. Mainly, however, the space being small, over half of it occupied by the pugnacious mules, there was little opportunity for the activity that might have dispelled the extreme coldness of the winter days, and Sorrel was glad enough to be taken back to his stall in the barn. In the stall, as in the corral, his desire for companionship was satisfied by the mere feeling of the presence of other creatures of his own kind. He would eat and drink when he could, and he would doze most of the rest of the time away, his dozing occasionally broken by some flashing memory of the rangeland, some picture of a desirable bit of grass patch, of the stream, the sand-bar, or the sudden-remembered sensations of racing freely and wildly over space, with muscles and blood unwearied.

There was little work for him to do during the winter, and Sorrel waxed fat and sleek. Occasionally the ranger would take him out and go off on trips into the forest over trails buried in deep snow. These trips were always so exhausting, because of the snow on the trail, that he had little mind for the forest or even the river, as he struggled to keep from slipping or sinking, his neck and sides wetting with perspiration, the moisture freezing on the hairs of

his fur. It would be days and weeks afterward before he would be rid of the aches and pains acquired trying to keep on his feet. Most willingly back in his stall, he would stand or lie, listening by the hour to the sound of restless hoofs, beating against the hard floors, like a sort of music which, droning faintly, banished all feeling of loneliness. He would give himself over completely to the luxurious indulgence in rest; and in this monotonous, dull-grey manner the winter passed by.

Early next summer, Sorrel was loaded heavily, once more, and the ranger went back to his station at Twin Creek. First coming to where the trail turned and Twin Creek poured noisily over the stones, into the Little North Fork of the Clearwater, Sorrel fell at once into the old puzzling state of agitation. This unfailing manifestation of feeling interested the ranger, who could not decide whether Sorrel did or did not think of where he had come from every time he came to that river. The ranger was not a sentimentalist, and he was not given to attributing the finer emotions to animals. Did this creature, who could not convey any description of his feelings, really think of home whenever he got to that point, or did he just want a drink of water, or was it a stupid habit he happened to have acquired? His half-formed answers to his own questions left him unsatisfied; but while the matter did interest him, there were so many things of so much greater importance on his responsible head, he merely expressed impatience to discourage any rebelliousness on Sorrel's part, and made his orders to turn, unmistakable.

Within a few weeks, Sorrel was so deeply in-

volved in the old routine, in the successive trips to and from the various mountain peaks, that the forest map of trails and peaks and rivers arose bright and clear in his mind, out of the night of the winter, into the day of reality and summer. Again he bore his tremendous burden up and down the steep grades, panting, snorting, obedient. Again the muscles and the joints were strained to the last degree. During this busy summer, as throughout the previous one, the constant contact with the Little North Fork, whence he had come into this strangely remote forest world, kept alive the desire to go searching back along the river, even though many of the old impulses to break loose and go, ceased to recur.

So summer followed winter, time after time and without number. The years followed fast, regularly, and monotonously. He felt at home now in the deep-shaded forest, and he took some pride in his apparent usefulness, in the evident importance of his duty, carrying the ranger up and down the mountain trails. Sometimes, visitors at the ranger station followed the ranger on saddle-horses to some especially picturesque mountain-top. Always, Sorrel, carrying the ranger, led the way; and though a limp, occasioned by strains in his muscles and a sort of rheumatic swelling in the joints of his forelegs, sometimes pained him excruciatingly, no amount of pain could have induced him, of his own free will, to follow the others rather than to lead them.

So accustomed was he to the forest and his services in it, that he would have been broken-hearted if he had been discarded, or handed over to

less important work ; and yet never, in all the countless days of this service, did he come near the Little North Fork of the Clearwater that he didn't feel himself filling up with vague and disturbing emotions. In the skyey glare of its endless stream, there was to him a luring away from the forest that was almost irresistible. With its shining silver finger, the little river pointed beckoningly to the unseen world which, in the passing of time, had lost its shadows of pain and evil and had lighted up with the golden exaltation which all living creatures bestow upon the things they hunger for that are out of reach.

## CHAPTER XVII

### FLAME BRIGHTENS THE LIGHT

**A**FTER a winter of little snow, there came a severely hot summer to the St. Joe National Forest. The ground under the giant timbers was dry and the needles brown and crisp. The dust of the trail rose in clouds from under Sorrel's hoofs, filling his nostrils, parching his throat, and making him constantly wheeze and snort as he toiled up the mountains, the skin wet under his saddle blanket, the saddle leather creaking as the heavy ranger bobbed in his seat, mopped his brow and worried about fires.

Early in August, a thunderstorm came along, setting the great forest afire in a hundred places. The ranger hardly slept. Ruthlessly he drove the fire-fighting crews, sent out from Spokane, and in his anxiety to get control of these various fires, before they gathered and destroyed the whole forest, he wore the very life out of Sorrel, driving him along trails overhung with smoke clouds, often forcing him to leave the trails altogether and go struggling through jungles of the dreaded manzanita. The limp that had slowly been creeping upon Sorrel through the succeeding summers, got a firmer hold upon him with each day's relentless drive.

Despite the fact that he was obliged to work

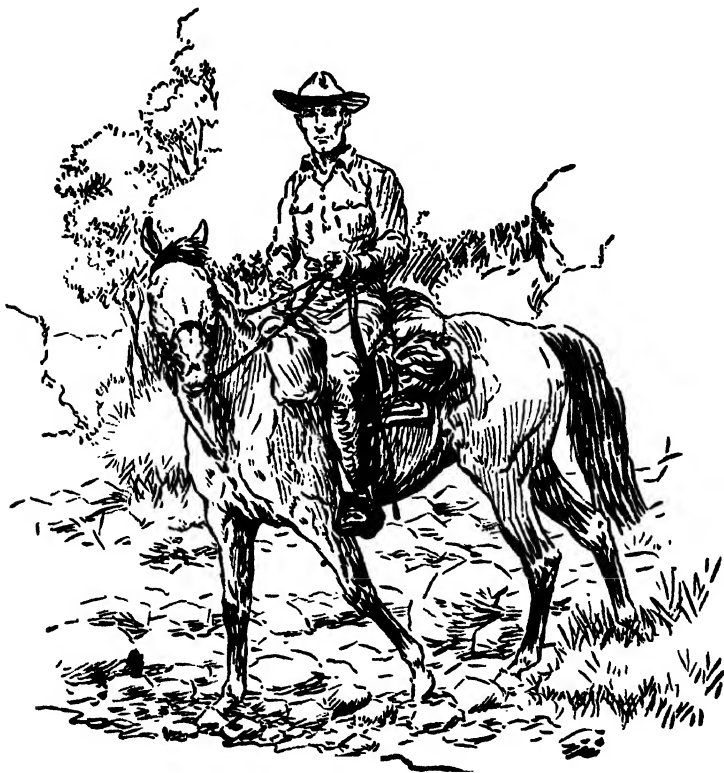
harder and that, with little rest, his food supply was reduced to starvation level. The pack trains, busy dragging loads of food to the many fire-fighting camps, had little room for bags of oats on their overloaded pack-saddles. Sorrel was obliged to carry his food on his back, behind the saddle, and since the ranger generally remained on the trails twice as long as he expected to, Sorrel spent days and nights tied to trees, tortured by the fear of the fires that raged within hearing, crying out against hunger.

The telephone wires that led from the various look-out towers, along miles and miles of forest trails into the Twin Creek Ranger Station, fairly burned with over-use. From many of the peaks came alarming reports of winds rising and fires leaping the trenches which desperate crews were digging; and the air, above the ranger station, comparatively safe in its swampy meadow, was loaded with smoke and particles of ashes and cinders. A dull, bluish-green haze hung in the air, turning the sun's disc to orange and the skylight into an angry moving grey. The worst of these fires raged half-way up the east slope of Stubtoe Peak.

One very early morning, the air since two o'clock after midnight having been steadily growing more oppressive, the ranger loaded Sorrel with all he could possibly tie to the saddle strings, and mounting, rode away southward. The influence of years of obedience moved him now as always, to disregard his feelings for the river and to turn on to the trail going west. He was surprised to find that the ranger really wanted him to go down the bank to the river this time. He picked his way down

uneasily, expecting to be pulled up at any moment and forced back on to the trail.

When he actually reached the river bed, his ears went up and his eyes glared, and he sniffed great draughts of air pervaded by the river dampness.



He was surprised to find that the ranger really wanted him to go down the banks of the river this time.

Visions arose in his mind of scenes along the entire river length, the tortuous canyon, the succession of boulders, the range fence and the beloved range-land. In the glare of the water reflecting the reddish hue of the smoke-screened sun, he picked his way over the stones with shaky haste.



But it was a long time since he had made use of his youthful ability to travel over the rocky river bed ; and despite the will to go, his burden was heavy, and his muscles strained. A mile down the river shore, the ranger stopped to let Sorrel regain his breath. As he snorted, blowing great blasts of air through his nostrils, the ranger muttered :

“ Wish I had taken the trail, damn it all. Half the distance, but it’ll take ’im twice as long to get there.”

But the ranger did not turn back. With the wind high, so many fires raging, the safest place in the forest was at the river ; and the ranger had no ambitions for martyrdom. It piqued him, though, as he urged Sorrel on, to be going so slowly. The rocks and boulders and windfalls lay in an endless clutter as far as the eye could see ; and making his way over them, Sorrel slipped and stumbled and groaned. Impatient to get to the fire where, he had been informed, the men were nervous and ready to abandon their trenches, the ranger jerked the reins impatiently ; then realizing the unfairness of his attitude, he dismounted. Leading Sorrel by the reins, the ranger noted that he was able to make much better distance without his bulk on his back.

“ I’ll just have to get a new saddle-horse,” he muttered. “ This time I’ll get me one that’s got strength—never mind his looks.”

For mile after mile the ranger trudged over the rock-cluttered river bed, clambering over windfalls and boulders, wading through tributary creeks, dragging Sorrel behind him. The air became more and more oppressive with smoke and heat, steadily filling up with the flurries of ash dust and cinders

which the wind was bringing down the mountain-side. Such feelings as Sorrel might have experienced at sight of the old river bed found little room in his distracted mind, steadily becoming more and more distracted as they neared the fire area.



Leading Sorrel by the reins, the ranger noted he could make better distance.

They came to where the dark clouds of smoke were pouring down the mountain-side and breaking into the ravine about the river, with a ravaging haste, turning, whirling, expanding in huge awe-inspiring curves. The ranger, well-nigh worn-out carrying his own weight, stopped to rest a moment and to think. Sorrel stood close behind him, his

eyes protruding out of his head, looking on at the rushing of the dark floods of smoke.

The ranger tested the actual direction of the wind. He concluded that it would be dangerous to leave his horse and equipment there, that the tendency of the wind, if it was to turn, was to turn north-east. He knew just about where the fire-fighters, if they hadn't abandoned their trench, were digging it ; and he was afraid that he would not be able to drag Sorrel through the wide stretch of smoke which was pouring down the mountain throughout the entire width of the fire. He stepped up nearer to Sorrel and getting a firmer grip on the reins, closer to the bridle rings, he stroked his forehead and talked to him.

" We just have to go through this."

So saying, he started off, going right into the smoke cloud. Sorrel tried to pull back, but the ranger jerked the reins and shouted angrily at him. Snorting and wheezing, Sorrel stumbled after him reluctantly. Every time, however, that an especially bad whirlwind of smoke enveloped them, Sorrel would try to pull back again, and the ranger would jerk the reins with greater force and shout louder. One time, he forced Sorrel's head down low and Sorrel discovered that the air close to the surface of the water was clearer. For a very long stretch, the actual river bed, right under the stream, appeared more level and pebbly, and throughout that stretch the ranger walked in the water, the water reaching up to his knees.

At times, in spite of his discovery, the air was so full of smoke that Sorrel coughed and choked, his eyes smarting, unable to see where he was going ;

but there was no notion of rebellion in his mind. So long as he was conscious of the ranger moving in the frightful darkness, before him, he wanted to cling to him. Under no circumstances would he have ventured back, alone. In the black mystery of fire, he placed his trust in the man who, he felt sure, would lead him out again into the clear air.

Then the smoke began growing thinner and thinner, and finally, the air cleared almost entirely. While the clean air was most refreshing, Sorrel's lungs pained him alarmingly; and he felt very weak and footsore, and afraid, his eyes smarting so he could hardly see. While the ranger lay down on a rock and washed his eyes out, Sorrel coughed and blew forcefully at the water that he tried to drink. Then the ranger got up and taking handfuls of water washed Sorrel's eyes for him. Sorrel did not like this operation but he was much more comfortable afterwards.

They went on till they came to where a small creek on the south side of the base of Stubtoe Peak breaks into the Little North Fork of the Clearwater. There, on the level point of pebbled land made by the fork of the little stream and the bigger one, the ranger tied him to a tree. Removing all the bundles and the saddle, and placing these on a flat rock close to the water, the ranger took the bridle-bit out of Sorrel's mouth and refastened the bridle back of his muzzle. He made sure that the bridle wouldn't pull off of his head, then he gave him a mess of oats, and hurriedly left him.

Sorrel was too busy getting at his oats to notice that the ranger was going away. When he had eaten it, however, and discovered himself alone, he

became nervous, and began to call as loud as he could. He soon concluded that the ranger was not within hearing ; and pulling at the reins, he moved around the tree with growing trepidation. In the distant north, the smoke clouds poured down into the ravine, great whiffs of it coming nearer and nearer to him. The world appeared to be in the process of destruction.

In the desire to get himself free, so that he might run away, down the river, he pulled and tugged at the reins till the leather straps twanged as they strained, till he grew weary pulling ; then he would stop and rest a while, glaring at the smoke clouds with fear-filled eyes, only to commence pulling and tugging again.

The hours went by. The smoke continued pouring in the distance, the world continued in a state of impending destruction, the day continued gloomy, and the sun remained a moving, orange disc under a bluish haze. The silence continued unbroken by anything save the breeze and the gentle lapping of the river over the stones, and the ranger remained away.

Wearied now, beyond endurance, nothing dreadful having occurred there since he had been tied to the tree, Sorrel finally dared to lie down on the pebbles. The air was freer from the taint of smoke close to the ground, and he enjoyed the luxury of getting off his feet. At first, for about half an hour, he watched timidly, his senses alert to any sign of danger, then slowly, without realizing it, he slipped off into a doze.

He had been dozing for some time when he was aroused by the sound of something splashing in the

water. He leaped to his feet so quickly that he almost broke his neck as the reins held his head back. The air was suffocatingly heavy with smoke, and cinders were pelting the rocks and the water all around him, some of them large enough to cause puffs of steam when they struck the water. It was



Leaping into the air, he snapped the two straps.

dark as dusk, and whiffs of the smoke clouds whirled around, now and then, directly upon him.

He tried to call to the ranger for help, but his throat was smarting and his eyes flooded with moisture. He grew desperate. He ceased whinnying and gave himself over entirely to pulling and

tugging at the reins. Sometimes it seemed to him that the reins were giving way, but his head ached from the struggle, and the smoke choking him, he was obliged to drop his head to the ground to regain his breath.

Suddenly, out of the air, came a burning piece of bark, as big as his head. It struck a stone, near by, rebounded and dropped into the water with a hiss. It was all Sorrel needed. Leaping into the air, he snapped the two straps. His hind legs caving in under him, he almost rolled into the river. He got to his feet at once, and bewildered, dashed about blindly, a moment ; then stumbling into the Little North Fork, he hobbled away southward, as fast as he could go, stopping for nothing, waiting for nothing, moving through the night of smoke with no thought for anything but making distance.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE OLD WORLD DAWNS

**I**T was some time in the dark night, before Sorrel had passed out of the area, over which the floods of smoke were pouring. As long as he could at least partially see, however, he forged ahead without the slightest relaxing in his haste to get away from the fire. But the rocks were cruelly hard on his feet, and his rheumatic knees helped to impede his progress. Then, long after he had cleared the smoke from his lungs, the smoke night having blended into the real night, he began to slow down and to seek some place to rest.

He came to a small level spot on the shore, and sniffing the air nervously, was about to lie down, when, turning around, his eyes caught a gleam of red fire in the north-west. Raising his head high, he could see the red flames, reaching out and enveloping the trees, half-way up Stubtoe Mountain. The flames he saw were several miles behind, but to him they appeared right on his trail.

Disregarding the aches and pains all over his body, he turned, and with an alacrity that would have surprised him, had he done any thinking about it, shambled over the rocks, the bridle-bit hanging at his neck, beating harassingly upon his nether jaw.

All night long he continued his flight, moving



painfully over the cluttered areas, trotting wearily as soon as he came to the least level stretch of shore, stopping occasionally to turn to look back, seeing the fire from time to time, racing on breathlessly, after every glimpse of it.

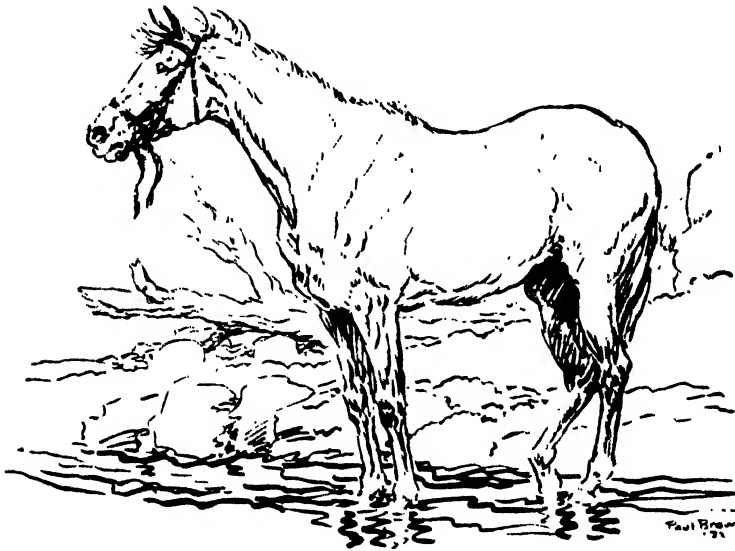
By daylight, all he could see was smoke pouring down the distant mountain-side, but the terror of the fire was fresh enough to keep him moving most of that day. Late in the afternoon, he found a bit of grass along the river, and browsing for an hour he lay down to rest. But with the coming of the night, the fire reappeared. It was only a distant gleam now, sometimes visible, sometimes disappearing, but he was still near enough to the discomfort he had endured to want to risk remaining where he could see it. Down the Little North Fork he went, his hoofs clattering on the stones, his iron shoes striking sparks, the bridle-bit beating against his jaw, stopping every once in a while to whirl around nervously and to peer into the shadows behind him.

Then, the canyon walls having risen higher and higher, the river having turned in its course, the gleam of fire vanished completely; but for a long while, he did not trust it, feeling sure that it was still racing after him, temporarily hidden from sight.

When morning came, he saw through a break in the canyon wall, great steam-like smoke clouds on the skyline, above miles of masses of trees, which he readily connected with the fire. Like a ghostly warning the white and creamy convolutions and curves, distance making them motionless on the sky, shut away the whole world of the forest, with a finality that all his fear of what the ranger would do

to him for running away, could not modify. He had been all too near these fires not to be more afraid of them than of man or beast.

Toward the middle of the day, he came to a patch of grass on the sloping banks of the river, which he was too hungry to resist. There he remained most of the day, tensely keeping guard as he cropped the grass, expecting to be driven away at any moment,



He would gaze down the North Fork for a long time.

then toward the latter part of the afternoon, he started off again.

Early in the evening, he came to where the Little North Fork breaks into the North Fork of the Clear-water ; and there, in full view of the meeting of the two rivers, the water churning and splashing busily, leaping the rapids and foaming away as in a race, he found a secluded spot, on a small ledge above the banks, and spent most of the night, resting.

He found considerable grass under the trees near the river ; and seeing nothing of the fire, from there, he remained in that neighbourhood for days, living a quiet leisurely life, cropping such grass as he could find, going down to the river to drink many times more often than he really needed to. Always when he drank, he would lift his head from the water at the slightest sound, and as the water dripped from his muzzle back to the river, he would gaze down the North Fork for a long time, then turn and look anxiously up the Little North Fork. In his mind the feeling that the ranger was coming to take him back to the ranger station, persisted obstinately. Had the ranger appeared suddenly, Sorrel would have called to him welcomingly, would have waited for him, obediently, if somewhat fearful of punishment ; but the ranger did not appear.

The days went by serenely and monotonously. More and more in his many drinkings at the river-shore, he would gaze down the North Fork, and less and less would he turn to look up the Little North Fork. Slowly a new significance pervaded the silver-white light of the broader river, an awakened memory began rebuilding feelings and associations that had faded, which began urging him, pulling him, luring him ; and then one day, the grass having completely given out where he was, came the irresistible impulse to go.

Sorrel started down the shores of the river with an anxiety and an eagerness that kept him going without stopping for hours. And as he moved through the continuous succession of rocks and boulders and windfalls, and trees and bushes and turns, and waded through the tributary streams that poured

down the forest slopes into the North Fork of the Clearwater, he began coming upon things that appeared familiar to him. He would stop, sniff at these things, wonder at them and go on, oddly moved by them.

He came to a crude, broken-down and dilapidated corral which had a long time ago been hastily put together out of the trunks of saplings. In the centre was a sapling bar which had served as a manger, and on the ground below it, was a mass of hay rotted brown and shrunk. He walked up against one of the bars and looked in. He sniffed at the hay from the distance. The hay was so rotten that he had no need of going in closer to sniff. There was nothing there for him, except the danger of being trapped, for he realized that it was one of those hateful, confining things that man sets up to catch creatures like himself; and yet he found it hard to move on, something held his interest there.

The canyon of the North Fork, from there, looked like a long, narrow tunnel. The forbidding walls and cliffs with their jungle of trees and the clutter of rocks and boulders along the river bed were not particularly attractive nor inviting; and yet the white, arrow-like light of the river, pointed to a world beyond the canyon out of sight, held like an optical illusion before his mind, a confused picture of a wide-open river, a gentle stream, a delightful, long sand-bar, and lovely rolling hills, aglow with peace and serenity.

There came a feeling of haste. He must move on; he must drag himself through the tunnel obscured in shadow, he must get farther along, beyond the reach of the ranger with his saddle, his mountains

and his forest fires, which had snarled dreadfully among the tall, complaining trees.

He left the dilapidated corral with a will, and he stepped doggedly over the stones, his confused mind aglow with a vague picture of his beloved rangeland, like a streak of dawn above the eastern blackness of the night through which he had toiled.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE STIRRUP-CUP

**F**OR a day and a night Sorrel plodded along over the rocks and the windfalls, driven by the brightening vision of his old home, but he was no longer the spry young colt he had been, when he had raced, full-blooded, away from the rangeland. He was worn-out by years of toil, and the restricting pain in the joints of his legs was not a mere, passing malady.

His most serious problem, however, was his inability to find grass. Wherever he looked there was only water and stone and tree-leaves. In desperation he tried to appease his hunger by nibbling more and more of the leaves, and these, not agreeing with him, weakened him as much as his hunger did, his weakness giving him the inclination to lie down and rest at every likely spot along the river bed, impeding his progress and prolonging his journey.

The canyon stretched out to several times its length. He began to despair of finding the range. The days rolled into weeks. The bones of his ribs protruded under his fur, and his head hung low for weariness.

Every bend in the river, however, gave him hope. Beyond that turn, ahead of him, would be the old range, or there, around that cliff, the banks would slope more gradually—he would see flat spaces,

green with grass. Then, finally getting around the particular turn or the cliff, he would find the canyon walls as steep, as rugged, and as forbidding as before, and he would lie down and doze off his disappointment.

Such food as he managed to find, here and there, was not enough to sustain him under the exertion of his journey. He found getting over the rocks increasingly difficult, tripping and falling often, sometimes spending whole mornings or afternoons, resting where he fell.

He started from one of these falls, at daybreak, one day, and turning with another turn in the canyon, he got a view of the mouth of a tributary creek where it broke through the wall of cliffs into the North Fork of the Clearwater, on the south shore, the shore opposite to the one he was on. Beyond the mouth of the creek, the canyon sloped more gradually, and at one spot, he made out a patch of green grass in the crescent embrace of a clump of trees.

Sorrel started impulsively into the river, to cross, but when the water was up to his knees, he stopped. The water was cold and his limbs ached, and the river surface, racing before his tired eyes, dizzied him. He remained standing there, shivering, dejected, uncertain. It was a long time since he had ventured into such a stream. The water tugged angrily at his weakened legs. He was inclined to turn back to the shore, but it was hard to give up the prospects of grass. He looked up once more, before returning to the shore, his tongue hanging out of his mouth for desire.

To his amazement, a string of wild horses, single



He plunged forward, recklessly, across the river.





file, were coming down the slope, along the crescent of the trees. There were white and red and spotted horses, and the leader was a grey, shaggy stallion. Spontaneously, Sorrel raised his head high, and whinnied with all his strength. The wild herd apparently did not hear him, the noise of the river, pouring over the stones, drowned his feeble call.

But Sorrel could no longer contain himself. His old hunger for companionship was as great as his hunger for grass; and here were both. Excitement is a part of the nature of youth, and enthusiasm makes a fairly good substitute for energy. Moved to a state of ecstasy by the sight of the wild herd of scrub ponies, he plunged forward, recklessly, across the river.

The North Fork of the Clearwater was still quite shallow at this time, just before the heavy autumnal rains had set in. Within a few minutes he had crossed the main current and had reached the shallow part of the opposite shore, going on eagerly to meet the wild herd, splashing the water in every direction. The wild ponies, still on the slope, stopped and looked up at Sorrel as with one head. They were a shaggy-haired, scrubby lot, yet they were horses, creatures of his own kind. Eagerly he called to them; but they only turned and raced swiftly around the crescent of trees, up the incline and out of sight.

Sorrel was much too weary to attempt to run after them, and much too hungry. Climbing laboriously and with much groaning to the grass patch, he began an avid grazing, the very exertion of which exhausted him. Before he had more than half-satisfied his hunger, he was obliged to lie down

and rest; and while he rested, he stretched his scrawny neck and cropped such grass as grew close to where he lay.

In the quiet of that evening, the herd came back again for water. When the leader had reached a point, half-way down the incline, Sorrel excitedly rose to his feet. At once the herd wildly stampeded back up the slope again; but an hour later, the dusk having lowered, they came down once more. This time, Sorrel was up grazing, when he saw them.

They had been watching him, to make sure there was no man with him. Badly in want of water, they started down cautiously, watching him closely as they went. Sorrel whinnied cordially. The advancing little stallion responded in kind, sniffing the air, in Sorrel's direction, as he went.

A few feet away, Sorrel started toward him, whinnying tremulously. At once the entire herd stopped with heads upraised. Sorrel stopped too, afraid they would run away from him; and in a few minutes, deciding he was harmless, the stallion moved on again, heading directly for the river. Sorrel turned, and limped along in the same direction. At the river shore, they allowed him to approach them. Sorrel sniffed noses with one after another, moving off from those who showed signs of bad temper.

After their evening drink, the herd turned, rather indifferent to Sorrel, and went up the incline again. Tired as he was, Sorrel did not want to remain down there, by the river, alone.

He puffed and grunted and snorted for very exertion, blowing the dust of the trail with muzzle

low to the ground, as he climbed in an effort to keep close to the older and weaker stragglers of the herd. Since the forest fire had driven him into freedom, he had gone searching for the heaven of his colthood. He hadn't found that particular heaven, but here was the stuff heaven is made of. Here was the river and grass and companionship.

When he finally reached the plains above, he was relieved to see the herd grazing over a small circle of open range, for he could not possibly have followed them had they gone on wandering. He stopped not far from an old roan mare and gazed away over space, a feeling of hope and satisfaction coming over him. Here was a rangeland so like the rangeland of his dreams that, in the desire to avoid the wearying process of thinking, he was quite willing to accept as *the* rangeland.

But this wild herd was a restless one. Never having toiled for man their muscles were not strained as his. They were forever moving to better pastures, forever going back to the river. For several days Sorrel struggled desperately to keep with them, going up and down the slope to the river, or racing away with them over the convolutions of the hills to the south, finding their activities much too hard for him, but determined not to lose their companionship. He managed to keep to the outer edge of the herd, lagging behind the older horses who also found the incessant moving of the younger ones very trying.

The season of bad weather arrived and for two weeks it rained spasmodically nearly every day. The winds went shrieking down the canyon over the river, whipping the dull grey ripples and lashing the

foam, seizing the trees and shaking them, wailing through the woods and whining over the open plains. To keep warm, the herd raced more often and faster than ever, and Sorrel wore himself out, panting after them. When it rained very hard, the herd went down into the canyon and took to cover of the trees or the overhanging boulders. Huddled together, they would stand and doze for hours as the wind tugged at their manes and tails, and the raindrops pelted the stones and the surface of the river.

Sorrel, of course, being a foreigner, still wearing the bridle, smelling of man and barn, was not allowed to push right into the warmer centre of the group; but the old roan mare, who had taken a fancy to him, always stopped beside him. Her teeth were rapidly giving way, and, unable to eat much grass, she was slowly approaching the end of her race. When late in the cold nights, Sorrel would lie down in some grassy nook, near where many of the others were lying down; the roan mare would invariably go sniffing among the sleepers and, finding Sorrel, would lie down close to him, with a deep groan-like sigh. Sorrel was always glad to have her come, though she was pretty clumsy and sometimes would drop down on his hind leg, stretched to the side of him. He never more than gently pulled his leg from under her, whinnying reassuringly, afraid to drive her off.

There came a spell of the loveliest of Indian summer weather, early in November. The river seemed to brighten up again, as a face, with laughter; and its heavy waters, muddy with the deposits of the corrosive fall rains, sparkled and



He never more than gently pulled his leg from under her.



foamed greyishly over the rocks, shooting tiny rainbows like songs of gladness, here and there, while the broader, deeper river swept along with a steady, alluring motion. The frosty earth melted with a false feeling of spring, and the oozing ground exuded a damp, fragrant earthiness that resembled the spring's aroma of growth. The skies cleared and turned to a sparkling blue, and the deciduous trees down the canyon sides turned red and gold and yellow, showering their precious colours over the stones and the pebbles.

A great and disturbing restlessness took possession of Sorrel. Wherever the herd might be, he stood at its ragged edge, looking longingly away into space, wishing he were somewhere else. When the herd went down the river to drink, he would raise his head from the water and stare away down the river westward, as if he saw something there that he hungered for. Often he would start away with a haste and determination, calling to the others to follow. The younger horses would hardly look at him, but the older ones who had been associating with him, would watch him with deep interest, wondering at his limping, for the wet, rainy season had aggravated the rheumatic condition of his joints. Sometimes he would start away down the river, westward, with a ridiculous attempt to lope, thinking that by his show of excitement, he might induce or frighten the others into loping with him. The old roan mare and one or two of the others would try to follow him, but she would always stop before she had gone very far, and call to him questioningly. Sometimes, as many as five and six of these older horses would be strung out, single file,



along the shore, all having started off after Sorrel, all apparently feeling that that was not the right direction to go. They knew of no trail up the canyon wall for some distance westward, and they were reluctant about leaving the range where they had lived so long a time.

Sometimes, just when Sorrel felt that they were at last going with him to search for the rangeland of his colthood, the stallion leader would send forth a call and leap away up the canyon wall; and Sorrel's friends would desert him, and Sorrel himself, in terror of being left behind alone, would turn and go limping after them.

But Sorrel became more restless than ever. The lovely weather was going, the winds were coming back, and into the air the dismal feeling of winter came like a faint and alarming odour. Long, thin, black V's of wild geese migrated southward, their melancholy honking ringing high across the earth. He tried more desperately than ever to induce his friends to go with him, but he would not go alone. Dissatisfied with his existence, fearful over the approach of winter, he continued his futile efforts, half-knowing that they were futile.

Then the mysterious influence of a life Sorrel knew nothing about, brought a change in his affairs. Throughout the entire district of Idaho and East Washington, there appeared in all the local papers an advertisement that read:

#### FOUR DOLLARS A HEAD FOR WILD HORSES

We will pay four dollars a head for wild range horses, delivered into our corrals.

THE WESTERN PACKING COMPANY.

Farmers in these districts, proud of their tractors, looked at this advertisement as they sat in stocking feet by the electric light, in their "front rooms," read it through several times, smiled and shook their heads significantly. "The day of the horse is going fast, by God." They were proud of their modernity. No more "critters" pulling and sweating over fields, dragging plough and harrow and reaper. "Tractors don't get sick, an' die!" Tractors do not run away, and doing ten times the work of horses, tractors can be worked overtime, without the risk of loss of horse-flesh.

"So they're goin' t' open a horse-meat plant in Idee-ho! I'll be durned if they'll sell me any horse-meat! Whew!" Some of these farmers, calling into the kitchen to "the wife," to tell her the news, would put a touch of pathos into their voices, others would be quite interested in the fact that this bit of news offered a chance, at last, to get rid of their old plugs, even though—"damn little they're offerin'."

To a great many, it was most disagreeable to think of turning Dobbin's weary muscles into steak after centuries of the worst kind of slavery, helping man to climb up to the civilization he boasts about. Unfair! Unjust! Despicable! Maybe, but, after all, am I my brother's keeper? Can my sentiments interfere with the due process of living according to the law? The packer spent good money for concrete and iron in the rearing of the slaughter-house. He is providing pay-envelopes for a lot of men in need of work. What improves a district more than a pay roll? Away with the sentimentalists who would obstruct the district's growth.

Each farmer in the district considered the advertisement according to his lights and his interests, with a smile, a shudder, or a shrug of the shoulders. And his boys, no longer under the spell of the saddle, having turned their barns into garages for automobile and tractor, sped noisily on their motor-cycles across the plains, at a hundred times the speed of the fastest horse, looking up into the sky as they raced, watching with envy the aeroplanes that roared across the heavens.

The farm-boy's heart no longer throbbed for the saddle-pony, how could it ache for any wrongs done to it? Their boyish souls did not bother themselves with disagreeable imaginings of ponies herded on the plains and driven into the cavernous maw of the shambles. Most of them passed over the advertisement without even noticing it; while a few were thrilled by the unexpected chance to earn enough to buy a new motor-cycle, a more modern one.

So the race of the horse is run. Like all things still living, they cling to life, but death is winning the game. The graceful beast must withdraw to the stories that will be read and marvelled at by children of the future. And it is best that way. The humiliating torment of the bridle-bit is going. Now is the time of all times to drink the stirrup-cup.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE BLACK DOORWAY

**I**T was a bleak autumn day. The sun was not visible, and the clouds made one flat tone of dismal grey across the entire sky. The brown old grasses waved in the sombre autumnal light, and manes, all around, fluttered to the mournful pulling of the wind. Geese continued flying southward, high in the air, and Sorrel was disturbed by their melancholy honking. The dissatisfaction with the life he was leading, which had set in with the passing of Indian summer, was taking a hold of him with the force of a disease. A subtle fear kept urging him to move, to reach out for the security he had enjoyed in the old winters of his colthood on the range. He always grazed at the outer edge of the circle of the herd, always on the west side of them, always raising his head from drinking or grazing, always trying to induce them to go west with him, unwilling to go without them.

They were up on the range above the canyon, grazing on the slope of a hill. Sorrel turned from a long preoccupied stare westward, to where most of the herd was grazing, and noted the strange behaviour of the little grey stallion. He was standing, high up the slope of the hill, rigid like a statue, the very motion of his mane and tail hair, in the wind, making his body seem the more rigidly tense with

alarm. Suddenly the stallion broke into a wild gallop down the incline, through the midst of the herd, and away up the next slope, with the herd at his heels.

While Sorrel could neither see nor sense anything, he caught the contagion of their fear, and as usual, strained every muscle in the effort to keep up with them. For more than a mile, Sorrel followed them as they fled south-westward, across the rolling hills, and away from the river and the canyon. The feeling that he was going away from the river worried him, and he slowed down as he approached the summit of a hill. Although the herd was leaving him, going down the other declivity, he stopped for just a second, to look back. To his horror, he beheld two men on horseback, some distance apart, pursuing them. He saw only two. For all he knew, there were thousands of them. He did not stop long enough to determine the number. The bridle-bit rapping annoyingly at his nether jaw, a subtle emblem of the danger that was now threatening him, he struggled desperately after the herd, which was fast leaving him behind.

The little grey stallion, being a good leader, understood at once that since the men were chasing them south and westward, he had better not go that way, if possible. Accordingly, he swerved to his right and struck out boldly north-west, in an attempt to get to a strip of woodland, through which he might wind his way back to the canyon.

But the riders were just as eager not to let him get back. Leaving the point directly behind Sorrel, both of them loped swiftly northward, to head him off. This gave Sorrel a chance to catch up with the

little band. He turned to his right, reaching out diagonally for the older lagers of the herd. He came to a hill-top from where he saw one of the riders running, neck and neck, with the stallion, apparently straining to get ahead of him. The rest of the herd were stampeding in disorder a few rods behind. As Sorrel ran, looking on breathlessly, he



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At the sound of the gun, the wild herd bunched together and turned back, coming so full upon Sorrel, that he was obliged to step aside to get out of their way. They swept around the hollow in a crescent, and Sorrel now in the midst of the older ones in the rear, saw the grey stallion come limping down the slope toward them, the riders riding leisurely some distance behind him. When the stallion came within a few feet of the group, Sorrel

saw a mass of red, along his shoulder and down one of his front legs, and smelled the disturbing odour of fresh blood. Crippled as he was, the little grey leader took command again, and limpingly led the herd away, southward, as the men apparently wanted him to go.

And at every attempt to swerve from the direction they wanted them to take, the riders swiftly loped to the side and turned them back. So too, when the herd went straight southward, the riders dropped back a bit, allowing them to move more leisurely.

They came to a road on the open plains, and the wounded leader started to cross it. At once there was a wild whoop from one of the riders, who swiftly loped across the road and turned him back. The stallion then turned and attempted to re-cross the road and strike out northward, but then the other rider drove him back. Weary from exertion and loss of blood the stallion was obviously eager for peace. There was nothing for him to do but to take the road; and when he did, and the riders once more fell back behind, he dropped into a steady, limping walk.

They moved along that road, in that way, for hours, it seemed. The road appeared endless; yet it well might have been, for the end of that road was what the little grey stallion, and Sorrel, and all the rest, instinctively resisted. The nearer they came to that end, the stranger the world appeared, the more intensely did they want to turn and go back. But the moment they swerved from the narrow road, the riders leaped sideways and at them. Blindly they ambled along, one as close to

the other as possible, each vaguely hoping that the one in front of him knew where he was going.

At the very rear of the group, Sorrel was obliged to inhale the clouds of dust that rose from the many hoofs before him. Since leaving the dry forest trails of the St. Joe National Forest, his lungs had healed considerably of the irritation of dust, now it seemed to torment him doubly, but he did not dare step off the road to avoid it. Snorting and coughing and sneezing and wheezing he moved along, feeling that the horrible flight would never end.

Then, quite abruptly, Sorrel became aware of an oppressive odour which emanated from the unknown distances ahead, and which kept growing stronger and stronger. The horses in front of him, and the dust that rose from their feet, made it impossible for him to see. Suddenly they came to a halt. Heads high and fearful, they pressed into each other, like a flock of frightened sheep, till a loud shriek from one of the riders sent them all forward again.

The road turned down a hill. The herd having dropped down the incline, Sorrel saw in the hollow before him a group of large, formidable buildings, with a huge tall smoke-stack, and a vast network of corrals, in which some horses were churning about.

The frightened herd made another attempt to turn from the road, but the riders were there instantly. One pressing tight against the other, heads high, eyes glaring with terror, they moved down toward the corrals. A step at a time, hesitating fearfully, they went nearer and nearer to the dreadful buildings, made horrible by the miasmatic stench that issued from them. A man appeared in



front of them as soon as they had reached the centre of the side of the first corral, and opened a wide gate, which swung across the road, obstructing their every hope to get by these sinister buildings. One rider behind them, the other to the side, they knew that they must go into the corral. The riders gathered so close upon them, that they were able to strike them with whips, and so the creatures at the rear pushed the hesitating ones in the front; and the little herd poured into the corral in disorder.

The wide gateway shut firmly upon them, and in the blind, futile manner of the wild horses in the next corral, they commenced an aimless circling, running into each other and by each other, till the wounded stallion fell from his feet. To avoid running over him, they collided, bunching up blindly in the dust clouds, and finally coming to rest in a corner.

His head over the roan mare's back, his wet chest against her wet side, Sorrel stared with fearful eyes at the corrals and the buildings. He saw that the one corral that had horses in it was between the one he was in and the buildings. He saw that the group of horses there were also standing close against each other in a corner, and that they were all gazing with terrible interest at a wide black doorway, on the second floor of the concrete building, to which an inclined passage-way led in a curve.

Intuitively, he was appalled by that black doorway, his eyes resting upon it spellbound; and it came to him slowly that the mysterious stench of blood issued from there. A man with a long stick appeared in its awful shadow, and came down the curving incline into the corral where the other group



A man with a long stick appeared.



of horses were trembling in their corner. As soon as he reached the ground those horses began churning around in a circle. Sorrel saw the long stick come down and cut four of the wild horses away from the rest of the group. Then he saw the man get behind the four and drive them up the passageway, while the rest of the herd went back to their corner.

The skin quivered on Sorrel's sides as he watched the four horses go up the incline. The first of these four, a fine white fellow, moved up on shaky legs, and a few feet from the awful black door he stopped abruptly, terror manifest like flames in the writhing muscles of his fine, fat body. The other three, behind him, tried to turn, too, but the man with the long stick quickly shut a wooden gate, half-way up the incline, then he climbed over the gate and brandished his stick.

The white horse, completely terrorized, leaped into the black doorway. There was the report of a gun, and Sorrel saw a flash of white rump, moving down the shadow. He saw no more. The report of the gun had started another stampede in his corral. Again they churned around in wildest confusion, the dust enveloping them, charitably shutting away for a moment the ghastliness of the black doorway.

Thus the gun battered the noisy, dusty, evil-smelling air, again and again, all the weary long day through. Then late in the afternoon there came an especially long pause in the tragic turmoil. Horses all around Sorrel, worn-out by their futile expressions of fear, lay down to rest a bit. And they rested, panting for breath, snorting to blow the dust away, until the man with the long stick reappeared

again. This time he came into their corral, leaving the gate to the one next to the building, open. As he came toward them, sideways, the herd swept away from him and loped in a body into the next corral, where the other herd had vanished, four by four, during the day. . .

The man with the big stick shut the gate he had left open, and then walking up the inclined passage-way, rolled a huge iron door across the black doorway. That the process had come to a pause for the night, Sorrel did not know, any more than he knew why fate should have begrudged them at least one more night's peace.

The quiet that had come with the lowering of the night was suddenly broken by the blowing of a whistle, which drove each and every one of them to their feet, and sent them foolishly sweeping around the corral raising the dust again.

The herd finally gathered in the corner farthest from the opening into the inclined passage-way, and affectionately pressing into each other, looked on at the lights that gleamed in the countless windows, that arose like comets in the night sky, and as quickly went out. What the night was to bring to them, what the next day was to reveal, they neither knew nor conjectured; they knew only that they were desperately afraid, and every cell in their bodies vibrated to that fear.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE INCREDIBLE !

**S**ORREL was awakened, late in the night, by the clatter of a freight train pulling into the packing-company yards, grinding along the track that lay parallel to the side of the two corrals, next to the two he had been in. Spurting clouds of black smoke, studded with red cinders, the locomotive pushed forward, ringing its great bell and flooding space with its light. The herd went frantic, again running frenziedly around the corral, but Sorrel did not join them this time. He had seen too many of these locomotives come pulling in and out of Avery. He stopped in a corner, out of their way, and reaching over the topmost beam of the corral wall, looked on.

Lights appeared in several of the windows of the building, and the place began to ring with the shouts and echoes of sleepy men. The freight train stopped beyond the corral to the side of the one Sorrel was in, but so bright were the lights that had been switched on, that Sorrel could see distinctly what was taking place.

A side door was opened in one of the freight cars, and there came a clamour of fearful whinnying and a clatter of hoofs ; then several horse heads appeared. The confined creatures burst forth, running eagerly down the gangway into the adjoining corral.

The locomotive started up once more with a frightful sputter of smoke and steam, and bringing another freight car to the gangway, stopped again. Another group of wild horses were unloaded, and again the locomotive moved on.

The frightened new-comers raced madly around their corral, as futilely as every other helpless herd had done before them. Hardly knowing why, Sorrel and his companions joined the clamour and began churning the dust in a circle, as if it were the most important thing in the world to do.

The freight train drew away as noisily as it had come. The men returned to their rooms in the building, and the lights in the windows went out, but the new-comers rejected the pseudo peace of the shambles. Wearied by their clamour, their racing and their dust, Sorrel and his companions who had finally settled down to rest again, called to them; but they did not quiet down until sometime near daybreak. And even then, after most of them had sought rest and attempted to doze, some inconsolable soul, unwilling to give up the freedom of the wilds for this evil-smelling confinement, would disturb them, every once in a while, with a sudden blast of protest, calling out to the unhearing ears of life, without expecting an answer.

Death in the shambles is an assiduous worker, and daylight brought back the man with the stick. The little band began racing around with all the previous day's terror, and Sorrel limped with the older ones in the rear. Group after group in threes and fours were driven up the inclined passage-way to the black doorway, and the gun began tolling the futile count of death. Sorrel wisely clung to the

farthest corner of the corral, trotting haltingly, seeing the others go, expecting soon to be obliged to go up into the black doorway as the others were going, expecting pain, unable to think of a way of escaping it, moving to and fro helplessly, as if he were being moved by a force outside of himself.

Then abruptly, there came a cessation of the turmoil. The man with the long stick went off to the farther wall of the corral and climbed the horizontal beams, sitting down astride of the highest of these. Two other men had come out of the building. They were standing outside the corral, talking to two men on horseback. Sorrel watched them with intense interest. He thought of the ranger and the tall young rancher, but he knew that neither of these were there. All the men appeared quite inactive, but the two saddle-horses, under the two men, were restless, obviously worried by the smell that emanated from the black doorway. The horsemen pulled at the reins, impatiently, talking as they did so.

"Every farmer in this county's lost some o' his critters, since you folks been advertisin' for wild horses," said one of the mounted men, his horse so restive he shook his voice.

"We got t'gether," cried the second man, holding up a clenched fist, "an' I tell y'u, we're goin' to hold you responsible for every one that's lost."

"We give our men orders to accept no horse but wild range horses," replied the official of the packing company, in a conciliatory manner, adding, "except, of course, where some farmer brings his own old plug ; but we're not really looking for that kind of animal."



"Well, I'll bet y'u that there sorrel horse with the bridle-bit hangin' under his lips weren't brought here by no farmer an' sold to you, for he'd 'a' had the sense to take the bridle off," cried the first of the two men. "Looks like a damn good bridle."

The official climbed the corral wall with alacrity and looked.

"Where do you see——" he started, but stopped, and turning to his man with the long stick, he said, "What the devil's the matter with you, Mike? Get in there, single that fellow out and drive him away from here. You had no business letting a horse like that in here in the first place."

The two men rode triumphantly around to the other corral where the new-comers were confined, and the official walked around with them. The man with the long stick in his hands, leaped down into the corral, muttering things to himself, striking out directly for Sorrel.

Sorrel was terrified as soon as he realized that the man was after him; and yet when the old familiar command to halt sounded, he stopped. The man seized the bits of strap hanging from the bridles, and began pulling Sorrel toward the gate. Opening the gate, he drove him through it, into the yard of the packing-company office buildings, then reshutting the gate, he started after Sorrel with his stick, driving him around to the road he had come upon. Sorrel did not like the idea of being sent anywhere alone; yet the air, heavy with the stench of blood, set every cell in his body afire with the urge to escape, to get out of reach. And he wasn't absolutely sure that he was being sent away, either. It seemed incredible to him that man should willingly



Seizing a stone he threw it, hitting Sorrel.



let him go where he pleased. Did they really mean him to go ? Would they send out something or other and pull him back ?

From the corral came an envious whinny. Sorrel turned quickly. He saw the wild, shaggy head of the old roan mare over the topmost beam of the corral wall, her big eyes sparkling with eagerness, her nostrils distended with feeling. Several of the others, horses who had shown no interest in him before, put their heads over the corral wall and called in the same fervid manner. Sorrel started toward the wall to sniff noses with them and assure them of his good-will, but the man with the long stick came running around, and seizing a stone, he threw it, hitting Sorrel on the back.

Sorrel was bewildered. He saw the open road before him and he leaped forward, limping ridiculously in an effort to gallop out of reach. When he came to the hill-top from which he had gotten his first glimpse of this place of stench and dust and hunger and thirst and fear, he stopped to look back.

It was a dreadful place. Black clouds poured from the tall smoke-stack, and in the corrals where the wild, frightened horses whirled round dizzily, the dust curled like vapour, drawing a grey, sinister veil of mist across the bewildering mass of stone and brick and corral bars. There was something about the place that was more horrible than any he had ever known ; yet it was so difficult for him to run off from the wild herd that he had accepted and lived with, to go off into the world that lay so bleak and barren around him.

Again came the report of the gun. Sorrel ran off a distance, then turned and came back. He wanted

the herd to run with and to live with, along the river. From the hill-top he called as loud and as long as he could, urging them to come away with him.

Just then the two horsemen, whose visit to the packing-company yards had given him his miraculous escape, came round the end corral to the roadway. Horsemen Sorrel had always run from. Horsemen meant capture and pain and trouble. Frantic with fear, he swerved from the road, and turning northward in the direction of the river, he ran breathlessly till he nearly dropped from his feet.

He rested in the hollow of an open plain where he no longer saw the buildings nor the men, but he rested with little comfort, afraid even to graze ; and as soon as he had regained his breath, he went on, loping and trotting by turns, stopping occasionally to look back, feeling that there could be no peace for him, till he had hidden himself in the shadows of the canyon.

## CHAPTER XXII

### WINTER AND PEACE

**D**RIVEN by constant fear of pursuit, visions of the terrible black doorway continually darting before his eyes, the smell of blood strangely clinging to his nostrils, Sorrel came at last to the great canyon of the Clearwater, without having met with anything more serious than the barking of dogs, in the distant farmyards, which he avoided with desperate care. He arrived at the canyon lip unexpectedly, having blindly made his way between the dense trees of a wide stretch of forest. He stopped dead still and stood for some time, gazing over the tree-tops that lowered down the steep declivity, upon the meeting of the North Fork with the main body of the Clearwater. A good many miles south and west of the point where he had come upon the wild herd, this awe-inspiring juncture of the two rivers appeared bewilderingly unfamiliar; but when, after a great deal of wasted effort going down to impassable obstructions and climbing up to the top again, to find a better way, he finally reached the shore of the North Fork, things began to look less unfamiliar.

Down below, however, where the two rivers came together, there was no grass, nothing but boulders and driftwood and rocks, wet and treacherously slippery with ice. The thought of going back up the

canyon wall for the scanty grass he might find on the forest floor, was unendurable. Nor could he abide any notion or plan that involved going back eastward and northward along the North Fork, for the shadow of the evil-smelling black doorway was over all the land that came together at this point, between the two rivers.

And so intense was the fear of that cursed shadow, that all his instinct urged him to put one of these forbidding rivers between himself and the formless thing he was fleeing from. It wasn't easy for him to decide which of the two rivers to undertake to cross; and yet, a dim light in his fading memory moved him forcefully in the direction of the south shore of the Clearwater. Twice he started over the ice of the big river, broke through each time, then finally went back to the shore, and spent the cold night, shivering in the shadow of a boulder. At daybreak, the river appeared much more solidly frozen. For a long time, he stood on the shore and looked across the Clearwater, sniffing the air wistfully, turning his head back now and then.

He tried again. The ice was horribly slippery, and his legs trembled uncertainly. He made a dozen feet without slipping, then went down on his side with a crash, bruising his hip painfully. But the desire to get to the south shore where the river would shut off the rear protectingly, sent him on cautiously. Toward the centre of the river, he broke through the ice. The cake of ice he was on, sank, throwing him forward against the sharp edge of the remaining ice, which cut into his forelegs, almost to the bone. Terrified by the cold water and the stinging pain in his cuts, he lost his head, and

started back, but the current whirled him around, pelting his sides with the pieces of ice on its surface, and thrust him once more against the broken edge. The impact smashed the ice, giving him a chance to escape the main force of the current.

Beating wildly with all four legs, he reached the shallower portion of the river, and felt the firmer river bottom under his hoofs. When he came to another mass of unbroken ice and attempted to climb up on it, he chipped off enough of it to enable him to push forward another few feet. In this manner he came to where a great number of stones jutted out above the ice. Here it was so shallow that he was able to step up on the stones, and pick his way on shaky legs to the shore.

So worn-out was he by this time, that he dropped to the ground and lay there for half the day. Several days he remained near that spot, cropping a few blades of grass, now and then resting while his cuts and bruises healed. But the grass was not plentiful there, and the canyon wall seemed strange and forbidding. His vitality seemed to be oozing away with the grey days, and an intense desire to get home, to shelter, sent him shambling along the river toward the west.

Before night had fallen, flakes began fluttering through the air. On the lee side of a clump of dead bushes, he lay down, troubled by the blanket of snow that spread over him, yet too weary to move. Next morning he shook the snow from his body and lumbered on with feverish steadiness. By the time the sun had eaten away the snow from the open spaces, he came to a barbed-wire fence, which stretched clear across his way, over the stream of



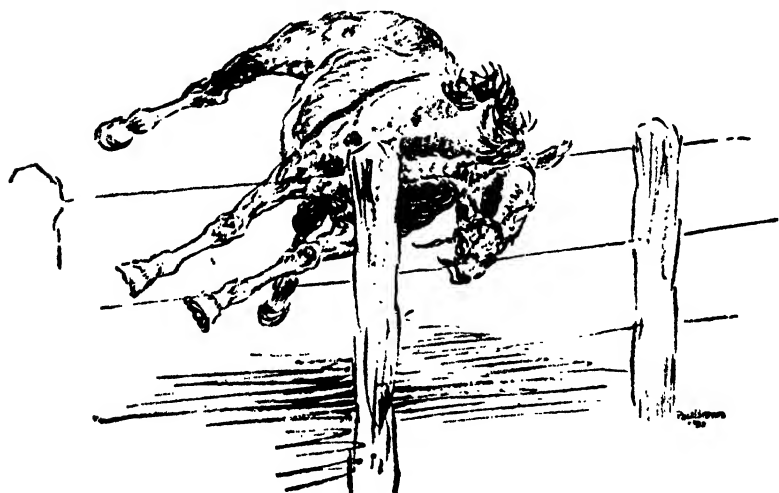
water which was frozen solid, to a long sand-bar that bulged out above the ice.

The fence vexed him, at first. He pushed his old chest tight against the barbed wires, till the barbs pricked him; and he looked over into the spaces it barred him from. As he looked, things began to clear before his eyes. His ears went up. His eyes dilated. Slowly he made out the familiar twists in the pebbled shore, the clumps of trees, the boulders, the yellow sand-bar along the entire length of the river, as far as the eye could see. Up above, the serrations of the canyon lip differed vastly from those he had been looking at for weeks. There was a familiar glow about them that made it hard for him to stand still and look. Unable to contain himself, he pushed harder, and suddenly sent forth a call from the very depths of his being. The echoes of his call were like a hearty welcome. Crazed by his excitement he turned toward the river, running along the fence, to get around the end of the wires.

Half-way between the shore and the sand-bar, he fell with a crash, feeling himself whirled around on the slippery surface of the ice. When he came to rest, at last, his head and shoulders were on the west side of the hanging barbed wire, the rest of his body on the east side, his side pressing the wire upward, several inches out of line. As he made his first attempt to right himself and get up on his feet, the wire hurt him, the barbs sticking into his skin. This frightened him. Responding in his usual manner, when he was frightened, Sorrel kicked wildly with all four legs, beating hoofs and head against the ice, making a violent effort to rise. The cold wire snapped. The upper wire scraped the

middle portion of his backbone, but Sorrel got to his feet, snorting and shaking himself. His beloved rangeland at last !

His youthful energy seemed to come back to him with the wildly joyous feeling that he was back home, where he had dreamed of being for countless, immeasurable years. Down the old familiar shore he went trotting, limpingly, calling frenziedly to the



Half-way between the shore and the sand-bar, he fell with a crash.

ghostly forms of companions, who seemed to be eluding him, hiding in the shadows.

He came to where the overhanging boulder sat like a living thing, grown old, looking down upon the frozen river. Many a time he had gone up that narrow, winding trail, many a time he had dozed in the shadow underneath, many a warm, beloved body, there, had shut off the cold hostility of the world outside. Up the path he went, groaning and snorting, but the ledge was deserted, and he did not like to stay there. He nipped a few mouthfuls of

grass, and without appetite, turned back down to the canyon bottom, calling futilely and foolishly.

He stood still and looked. He called, then listened to the echoes that came back. With bobbing head he walked off doggedly to the trail along the east fence, and made his laborious way up the canyon wall, somewhat in the manner of the old buckskin plug, when Sorrel used to sweep by him swiftly.

But there was no one on the rangeland above either. He stood and gazed over empty space, across waves of dead, brown grass, and patches of snow in the hollows, and with fervid mutterings, went at grazing, raising his head every few minutes in the hope that some horse form would appear to belie the droning desolation.

It was impossible for him to remain still, though the cuts and bruises over his body burned, and fever in his blood demanded rest. Down one hill and up the next he went, till his confused brain assumed that all the horses he remembered and was seeking, were down along the river; and he turned and raced back to the canyon.

Down in the canyon the loneliness was just as hard to bear, and soon, Sorrel went trotting westward along the river, calling in vain. At the west fence of the range, tired as he was, he started up the steep incline, along that trail. It took him many times the time to get to the top that it used to take him, when he had been young and strong; but never had he reached that canyon lip more eagerly.

When he rounded the knob, panting for breath, he was obsessed by the idea that a group of his old friends had just dropped out of sight, at the next

declivity, beyond the stony area. He started racing after them, struggling for very breath, but at the point where the stony area drops away into the next hollow, he stopped and stared with a heavy feeling of having been cheated. The deserted path, faint and overgrown, led down into the hollow. He was alone, seemingly more dreadfully alone than he had ever been in his life before.

To his right was the pointed hill, a familiar look about its round, pointed top, the slopes like a familiar voice calling to him. He turned to his right, but he had no strength to run with; and as he made his lumbering, careful way down into the hollow, strange uncanny feelings came over him. At the same time something urged him on. His plan was quite clear to him. He was going up to the top of the pointed hill, as he used to go in the dim past, knowing that from there he could see farther, but seeking the easiest slope, he came so abruptly upon an old heap of bleached bones that he leaped sideways in fright; then realizing that it was not moving, he stopped, stretched his long scrawny neck in its direction and sniffed and sniffed. He did not like the uncanny heap, half-covered with tall weeds and snow; and yet, something so clearly familiar was there about it, that he suddenly turned his head and looked up the slope, recalling the fact that there was another one like it up there. He saw it, and so moved was he by this remembering that he started up the incline, toward the second heap of bones, with the eagerness of expectation. But he stopped before he got to it, and sniffing a moment, turned, giving it a wide berth, and going on up to the peak of the hill.

But even from that height, he saw none of the forms of horses that his imagination had been picturing for him. He stood there, turning and looking in every direction, seeing only the barren convolutions of the range hills, with dead bushes here and there, looking everywhere, in vain, till his eyes began to hurt. In the midst of that desolate ocean of empty space, there appeared to be something friendly and supporting in the two heaps of bones ; and so he remained, grazing on the hill.

At night, however, he felt that the overhanging boulder offered more protection against the wind, and he went down into the canyon, and lay down on the ledge under it. The wind died down a bit and it seemed to grow somewhat warmer, and Sorrel fell into a doze. When his consciousness came back, at daybreak, he found his body, the ledge and everything else, covered with snow, the trees, the river and the canyon walls murky behind the tremulous veil of falling flakes.

He got up nervously and shook the snow from his body, then he started down to the canyon bottom, weighed down by a fearful sense of misgiving. Already there was nearly a foot of snow on everything. There had been little enough grass on the canyon bottom, and searching for it there, by digging down through the snow, was even to his understanding a not very profitable venture. He ate a lot of snow, nibbled at some bitter, leathery, dead leaves and twigs ; and shivering with cold and hunger, stood looking off into space.

Then he lumbered off along the river, going slowly, attempting to dig for grass, here and there, stopping before he reached ground with a feeling of

futility, and moving on. When he came to the west fence, he started up the incline. Up on the range above, grass was more plentiful. He reached the first ledge and went down on his side, sliding down twice the length of his body, before he came to a stop against a clump of bushes. He lay there for several minutes before he got to his feet and tried the path again. But he only slipped again. Finally, giving up, he returned to the ledge under the boulder and lay there most of the day.

It snowed all that day and toward evening, when it stopped, it turned bitterly cold. He lay shivering all night long, unable to sleep, hunger gnawing at his vitality. When daylight came he made a few feeble attempts to climb the canyon wall by the west trail, but gave up, wandering back dejectedly to the ledge under the boulder.

That night it snowed again, all night. When Sorrel started up from his feet the next morning he sank into the drift below the ledge, up to his flanks. Fortunately, there was a long strip of shrubs packed tight with snow at the edge of the drift, and his frenzied struggle to extricate himself, brought him to it. There he got a foothold, and by jumping down to the shallow drift below that, he was able to make the canyon bottom. On the stones, whipped clean by the wind, he was free to walk down the shore, but he stopped and stared back toward the boulder. He would not be able to go back up there again. This last bit of meagre comfort was going too. He must climb the canyon wall and get to the range above. There was grass on the range—there had always been grass on the range.

The wind that was so cruelly parting the hair of

his fur and penetrating his skin, had torn the greater part of the snows from the trail, and Sorrel, with a few slips and falls, a few bruises and twists of his muscles, managed at last to reach the lip of the canyon. But the view that met his gaze up there was dishearteningly bleak. The stony area was covered by an even tone of hardened snow-crust. Only the upper wire of the west fence was visible, thick like a rope with the snow that stuck to it, and the posts appeared so queer, they almost frightened him.

There was no path visible anywhere, and disliking the queerness of the fence posts, he turned obliquely in the direction of the pointed hill. He broke through the icy crust as he walked, but since the snows were not so very deep over the stony area, he crossed it with comparative ease. The slope presented no greater difficulties, but down in the hollow, where the heap of bones was completely covered with snow, he sank into a deep drift.

The pointed hill stood smooth and white and silent, and the wind whistled as it swept by and over him. He began to struggle to get free, with more eagerness than sense. When he finally managed to extricate himself, he was completely exhausted. He was now too much afraid to lie down, so he remained standing, panting for breath, his sides throbbing, great blasts of air escaping him, his eyes slightly glazed, staring sideways.

When he had regained his breath, he ate a little of the snow, to allay his thirst and his fever, then a careful step at a time, he made his way around to the lee side of the hill. There he attempted to dig down for some grass, but his legs ached and

trembled, and there was no strength in them. He began to sense vaguely that he had come to the end of his journey. An intense desire for peace, for relief from the gnawing pains in his legs and the penetrating bitterness of the wintry winds was fast superseding all of his other wants.

The wind was dreadful. It did not let him rest. With mocking cruelty it dug its bony fingers through his skin. He could no longer stand up on his legs. Selecting a less-inclined spot, he turned clumsily around and around, like a dog, seeking the best, the least uncomfortable way of lying down. When at last he lay down, his head lowered with a strange heaviness that had come into it, till his lower lip touched the snow he was lying upon, and a benevolent sleep came to relieve him momentarily.

He dozed there a long time. Toward noon the sun came out and warmed him up a bit. He woke into full consciousness and began to consider getting up and digging for grass, but he was so heavily tired, he kept putting it off. The sun was swallowed up by dark passing clouds. It grew dismally grey again and the wind began stinging once more with all its heartlessness. It occurred to him that he might feel better if he bestirred himself, when his eyes widened and his head rose, and a horrible fear swept through his big body. Hardly a dozen feet away, coming up the incline before him, he saw the whitish-brown form of a coyote, coming up very slowly, his pointed muzzle sniffing hungrily.

So terrified was Sorrel that he couldn't move for a few seconds, then he leaped to his feet with an explosive energy he did not know he possessed, and laying back his ears, he kicked and whinnied as if

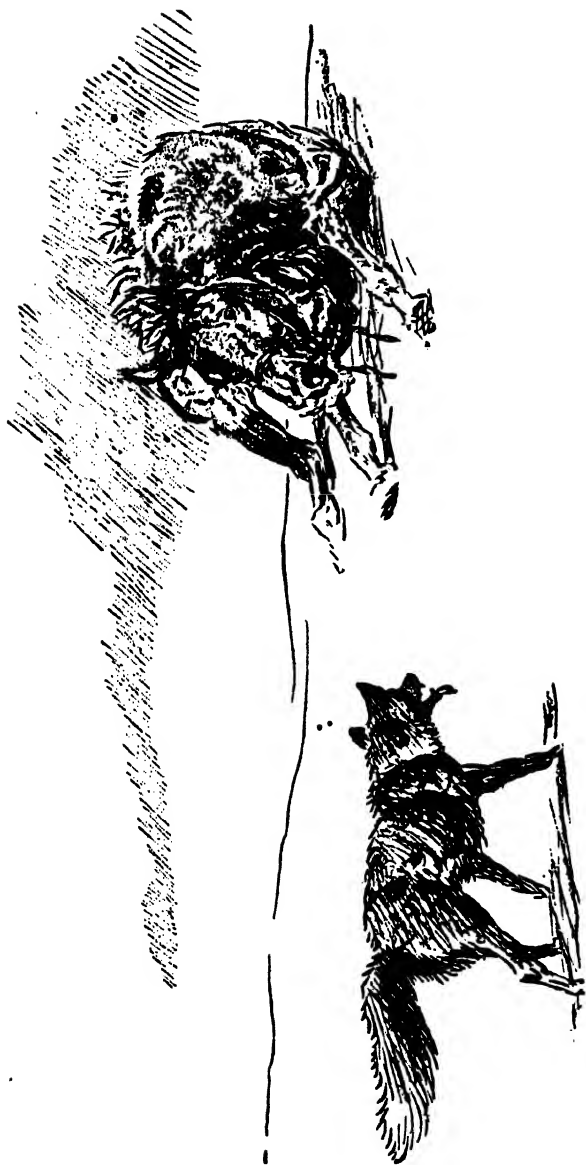


he had gone mad. The coyote sprang away, loping with the swift, slinking glide of coyotes, down the hollow and up the next incline. But there, directly opposite him, Sorrel made out his greyish form half-lost in the grey skies behind him.

Limping around so as to put the pointed hill between himself and the dreadful beast that was waiting to feed upon him, Sorrel had the desperate sense to move down the incline with greatest caution, so as to avoid sinking into drifts, where he knew he would be lost. So long as the ground appeared hard under his feet, he went limping as fast as he could, but when he got to the drifts in the hollow he would take a careful step, turn and look around for the coyote, then take another step.

He avoided the hollow as much as possible, making the next incline and travelling across it horizontally. A few feet away from the west fence of the range, he stopped and stared at the ungainly-looking posts; then he turned and surveyed the snowy wastes to the side and behind him. He did not see the coyote anywhere, but he was afraid to look too closely. The entire range appeared now infested with coyotes; and in the obscurity of his befuddled mind, the ranch yard loomed, holding out to him a vague hope of warmth and food, and protection against this beast, that would tear the flesh from his body.

It took him most of the afternoon to reach the south-west corner of the range fence. When he finally got there he found the barbed-wire gateway to the avenue between the two wire fences open, the way clear for him; but feeling a bit more secure



Belmont

["Coming up the incline before him, he saw the whitish-brown form of a coyote.



here against the coyote, he now was afraid to venture up the avenue to the ranch yard.

He stood looking along the avenue to the protuberances beyond the knob, white with snow, against the darker grey of an angry sky. The wind shrieked across the hardened surfaces of snow and stabbed his shaky body with a thousand spears. He remembered the barn with its warm, dark stalls, and he remembered that hay and oats had come regularly out of some inexhaustible supply. But it was so hard to venture in. Man had been kind, but man had also been cruel.

He turned to the side, and first looking backward for signs of the coyote, started to dig for grass. His poor clumsy, rheumatic legs seemed unable to swing with any telling effect on the snow. He tried harder, but the pain was as bad as his gnawing hunger. He stopped with a newer and vaguer sense of terror. His helplessness was complete. Hunger and pain had so weakened him that he would be unable to dig for grass. The icy snow had been poured out over all the world. There could be no grass, no food, anywhere but in the manger of the barn. There had been food there, through all the snowy winters.

With a strange feeling of hope and expectation, as if he had suddenly realized that he had overlooked a most important fact, that he had foolishly kept away from the one place where he could get all he was so tragically seeking, he started up the avenue between the wires, breaking through the crust, pulling his legs out with the very strength of his hope, bobbing his old head so doggedly and energetically that he did not hear the barking of the dog, till he

had reached the summit of the knob and looked down into the old familiar ranch yard.

The furious barking of the little beast brought him to a full realization of the enormity of the thing he had undertaken to do. With bulging eyes, smarting and burning in the wind, he stood gazing into the forbidden ranch yard, white with snow, stippled with footprints, deserted and desolate, the great barn door shut, black smoke pouring fearfully out of the dark point above the house.

He was afraid of that dog. He backed off a few paces to feel safer and set his eyes upon the house near which he saw the dog. He had the feeling that he must go away ; and yet, how could he, with that huge barn before his eyes ! He remembered now with even more vividness, the endless supply of oats and hay.

The back door of the house opened and a tall man, heavily dressed, appeared and stopped a few feet from the door steps, staring in Sorrel's direction. Sorrel stared back at him, paralysed by fear. He saw the man stoop a bit and drive the dog away, and the barking ceased. When the man rose to his full height, hope flooded Sorrel's old brain. From the depths of him, came a pleading, placating whinny.

Yet when the man started forward toward him Sorrel was afraid and turned and lumbered away back toward the range again. He did not go very fast, however, and the man ran after him. He continued moving half-heartedly even when he heard the man's voice calling softly to him and heard the crunch of his boots in the snow, to the side of him, continued moving till the man's hand



THE BARN

The back door of the house opened and a tall man, heavily dressed, appeared.



had reached out and taken hold of the pieces of straps dangling from the cold bit that had frozen to the long hair of his neck. He stopped with a fervid tremulous murmur of good-will. To Sorrel's unbelievable surprise, the man stroked his neck gently with his hand. Sorrel could not stand still for emotion. He whinnied softly and nervously and moved about on the snow at the man's feet. Then the man turned him around and led him into the ranch yard, and Sorrel appeared ridiculous, prancing like a spirited young horse and limping like an old plug.

At the back door of the house, the man stopped and rapped, ordering the dog who had come out barking again, to get away. The door flung open and a woman appeared with cries and exclamations that worried Sorrel, and kept his frosted muzzle tremulous with assurances of good-will. The woman then seized an overcoat hanging in the little vestibule, and throwing it over her head, came out. She stroked his neck affectionately as the man led him to the barn.

In the open barn doorway, Sorrel stood uncertainly a moment. From the darkened interior came the smell of gasoline and oil, and the spirited call of a lonely horse. Half the barn had been turned into a shed for automobile and tractor, and the other half seemed filled with cattle. The smell of cattle and oil bothered him, but there came another whinny, and he saw in the dim light the fat pinto rump of a horse and the swish of a restless tail. He felt more at home. He responded with his humble tremolo, and followed the rancher anxiously into the stall next to the one horse.



Against the empty manger, Sorrel began to search for food, but the rancher held up his head, trying to thaw away the cold bridle-bit from his hair, finally cutting it free with his jack-knife. In the meantime the rancher's wife went off, and came back with noisy exclamations, carrying a large horse-blanket in her hands. First slipping off the bridle and substituting a halter, the rancher tied Sorrel to the manger, then threw the horse-blanket over his back.

Sorrel murmured and neighed, overflowing with gratitude, searching for food, as he shivered under his blanket, while the warmth drove the stinging cold out of his blood.

From the next stall came the noisy whinnies of the pinto mare ; and Sorrel tried, good-naturedly, to answer her, but he was too much overcome with feeling and the desire for food to answer fully. He felt as if he had fallen down a canyon wall, had desperately resisted till he found his resisting useless, then let go, and gone sliding on without effort to stop himself.

Then the rancher threw a huge forkful of hay into his manger. Poor Sorrel attempted to seize a mouthful of the hay, but his jaws were stiff. The woman poured a full measure of oats into his oats box and he immediately got at that. He took the kernels eagerly into his mouth, but he slobbered them back into the box, unable to chew them, so stiff and cold were his jaws and teeth. The rancher brought a large mess of straw and threw it under Sorrel's feet and around them ; then, as the two of them stood near him, the woman stroking his neck with her warm, affectionate hand, Sorrel slowly began to eat,



Sorrel slowly began to eat, listening to the endless flow of words.



listening to the endless flow of words between the rancher and his wife.

"Poor old Prince," the woman kept repeating, "he'd 'a' died if he hadn't come here. What he must 'a' gone through! He's nothing but skin an' bones. Where do you s'ppose he's been all these years? An' think, Ed, whoever it was who stole 'im—it couldn't 'a' been someone around here, could it?"

"Naw," said the man slowly, looking at Sorrel in the fast-fading light. "I'm sure it was one o' them damned prospectors got hold of him, an' took 'im up the Bitter Roots somewhere. He limps like a horse's been carryin' heavy loads up an' down mountain trails."

"But think, Ed," said the woman with tears in her laughing eyes, "wherever he's been all these years, he's had it in his poor old head to come back to us. Think of it, Ed, I bet he's seen in his old head this barn an' us; an' can you imagine how he's been tryin', tryin' to get away, to come back to us?"

"He broke away, that's sure," said the man, picking up the bridle with the two pieces of reins dangling from the rings, and looking at it.

"Broke away to get back here, Ed. It just makes me cry. Poor old Prince, all these years thinkin' of your old home—an' here he is back. Ed, we just got to pension 'im off for the rest of his life. He must never do a bit o' work, just roam around on the range in summer, an' stay in his warm stall in the winter."

"Well, now come, Flossie," said the rancher, smiling, "you'll work yourself up so, you'll be fit for

nothin'. It's cold, let 'im alone. Let's go back to the house."

"Do you suppose he'd know Pinto?" asked the romantically minded woman.

"Naw, I don't think so."

"I don't see why not, though. Just because he can't talk an' say so? For the fun of it, Ed, let's put Pinto in his stall with him. See if they reco'nize each other."

Smiling hesitatingly, as if he felt he were doing a silly, womanish sort of thing, the rancher went off to get Pinto. He brought her whinnying excitedly, into the stall beside Sorrel and tied her to the manger. Pinto, sleek and fat and sprightly, reached over for the oats box, as if she hadn't had enough to eat. Sorrel was beside himself for excitement. The nearness of this other being of his own kind, the sense of security which he had lacked so acutely, had thrown him into a fever. This shower of blessings after so much misery and frustration was too much for him.

"See!" cried the woman. "I told you he'd reco'nize her. See how he goes on."

"Oh, he's just naturally glad to have company," said the man, laughing at his wife for her sentiment. "Every horse's that way; but I don't think he knows her."

"Look, Ed, the little pig, she's eating up his oats; and he lets her."

"Don't matter," said the rancher. "Not good for 'im to eat too much all at once. I bet's been a long time since he's had oats. He might kill 'imself eatin' too much."

"Gee!" exclaimed the woman, filled up with

emotion. "All those years! What a lot's happened since. You realize, Ed? Remember the day? That was when we first met, Ed, realize that? If it weren't for him I might never 'a' been here, your wife."

"Can't tell."

"No, I've thought about it many a time. He was such a fuzzy little thing. His big eyes shinin' out of your arm--I can see jus' the way you held him, as you talked to me. You sure was bashful!"

She smiled, and as she smiled a tear came into each eye.

"Well, Floss," said the man, putting his arm about her shoulder, "what in the world an' blue blazes y'u cryin' about? Y'u ain't sorry it all happened, are y'u?"

"You know better," murmured the woman.

"Well, then, come to the house. It's gettin' too durn cold for me in here. Let's celebrate an' have somethin' real good."

"I'll make y'u a nice pie, Ed," said the woman with childish enthusiasm. "Let's leave 'em alone together, t' talk over old times on the range."

By the time they had re-shut the huge barn door against the shrieking wind, it was dusk outdoors and a few more flakes appeared fluttering through the dismal atmosphere.

"I'm glad Tom's went off to the dance," said the shivering woman, referring to their hired man. Taking hold of her husband's arm, as hump-backed they moved toward the house, she added, "Let's not go to-night, you an' I, Ed. I'll make y'u a nice pie, an' let's jus' sit by the fire an' talk o' old times."

They came into the little vestibule. Closing the door, they shook the snow from their boots. The woman hung up her coat, and brushing back her snow-wet hair, she said softly, in the dark :

“ He was such a fuzzy little thing that Sunday, remember, Ed ? ” Then lowering her voice, she said with much suppressed feeling, “ Y’u glad he got out of the range, that day, an’ you had to go chasin’ ’im, an’ I came along, Ed ? ”

The rancher put his arm about his wife and kissed her cold forehead.

“ Come now, you get at that pie,” he said, to cover his emotions.

THE END

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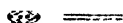
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